GUITARS, CARS, WATCHES, WINE & THE DELUXE LIFE

GUITAR AFICIONADO

MAGAZINE

PRINCE

THE MAJESTIC GUITARS THAT *CHANGED* FUNK, POP & ROCK

CREEDENCE
ROCK'S REVIVAL YEAR

PAUL GILBERT
A SHREDDIN' COLLECTION

NEW ORLEANS
THE *AFICIONADO* JAZZ FEST GUIDE

THE SOLIDBODY MISSING LINK

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SPIRITS
ICONOCLASTIC SCOTCH

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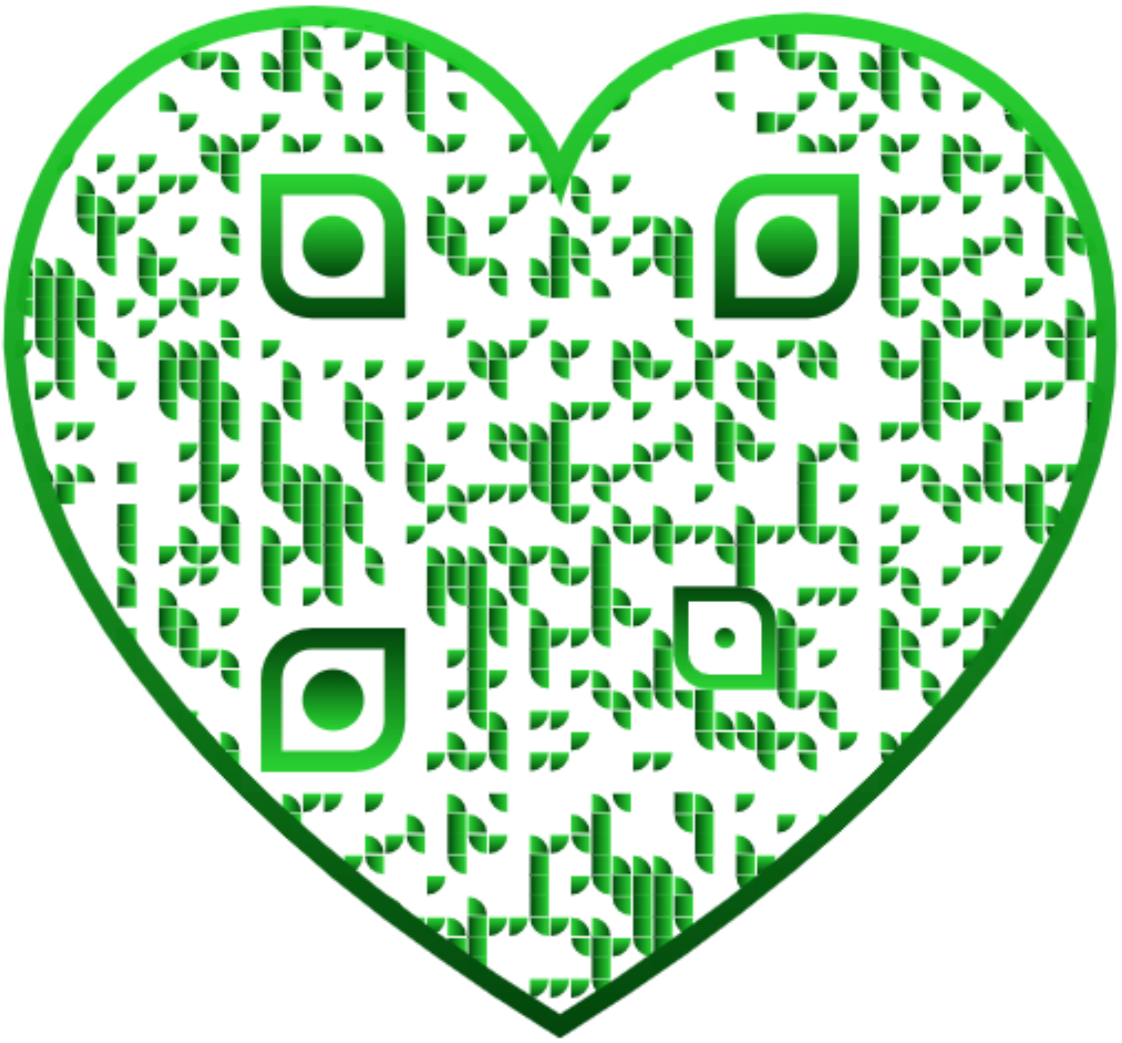

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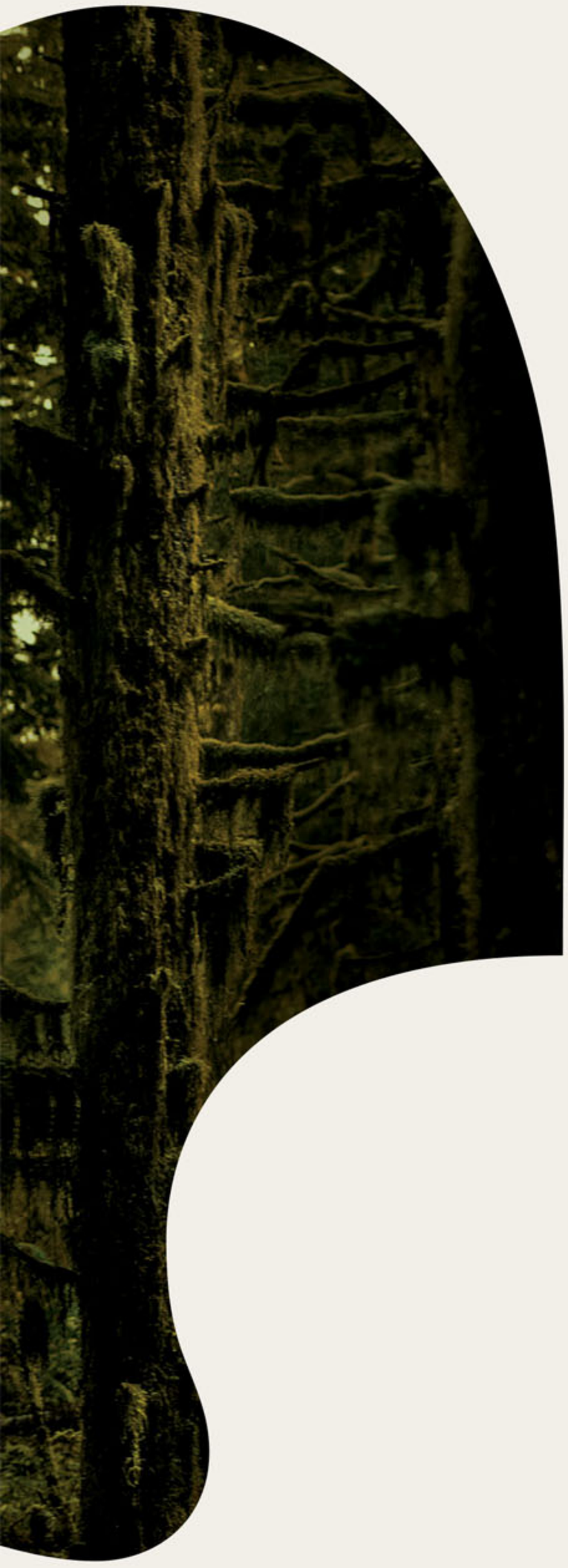

THIRTY YEARS AGO, WHEN STEVE McMINN STARTED SOURCING WOOD FOR GUITARS, FINDING THE RIGHT LOGS WAS AN EASY TASK. BUT WITH A DEPLETING FOREST, FINDING THOSE SAME LOGS TODAY IS INCREASINGLY DIFFICULT. A GENERATION FROM NOW, WHO KNOWS? SO, TO ENSURE WE HAVE GUITARS TOMORROW, STEVE IS STEPPING INTO THE UNKNOWN, TODAY. HE IS PIONEERING NEW FORESTRY TECHNIQUES TO GROW AND CUT TREES JUST FOR GUITARS, SECURING THE FUTURE OF THESE WOODS. STEVE CONTINUES TO INVEST HIS PASSION, TIME AND MONEY TACKLING PROBLEMS THAT WILL TAKE GENERATIONS TO SOLVE. AND WHILE STEVE WON'T EVER MEET HIS SON'S GRANDCHILDREN, HE KNOWS THEY'LL HAVE A GUITAR TO PLAY. THIS STORY INSPIRES AND REMINDS US THAT THE WORLD NEEDS MORE VISIONARIES LIKE STEVE. TO LEARN MORE ABOUT STEVE AND OTHERS WITH THE COURAGE TO STEP FORWARD, *visit taylorguitars.com*

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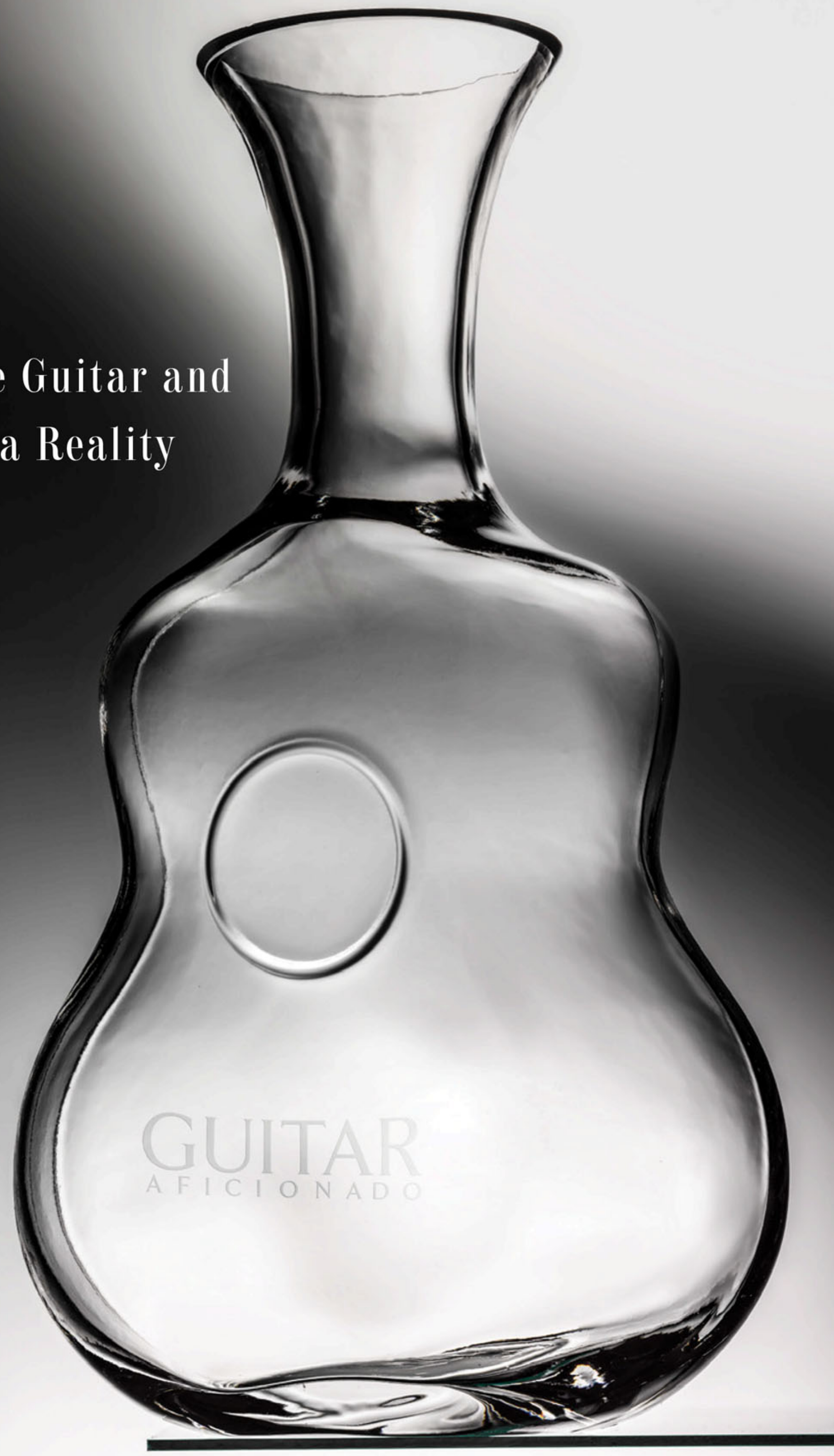

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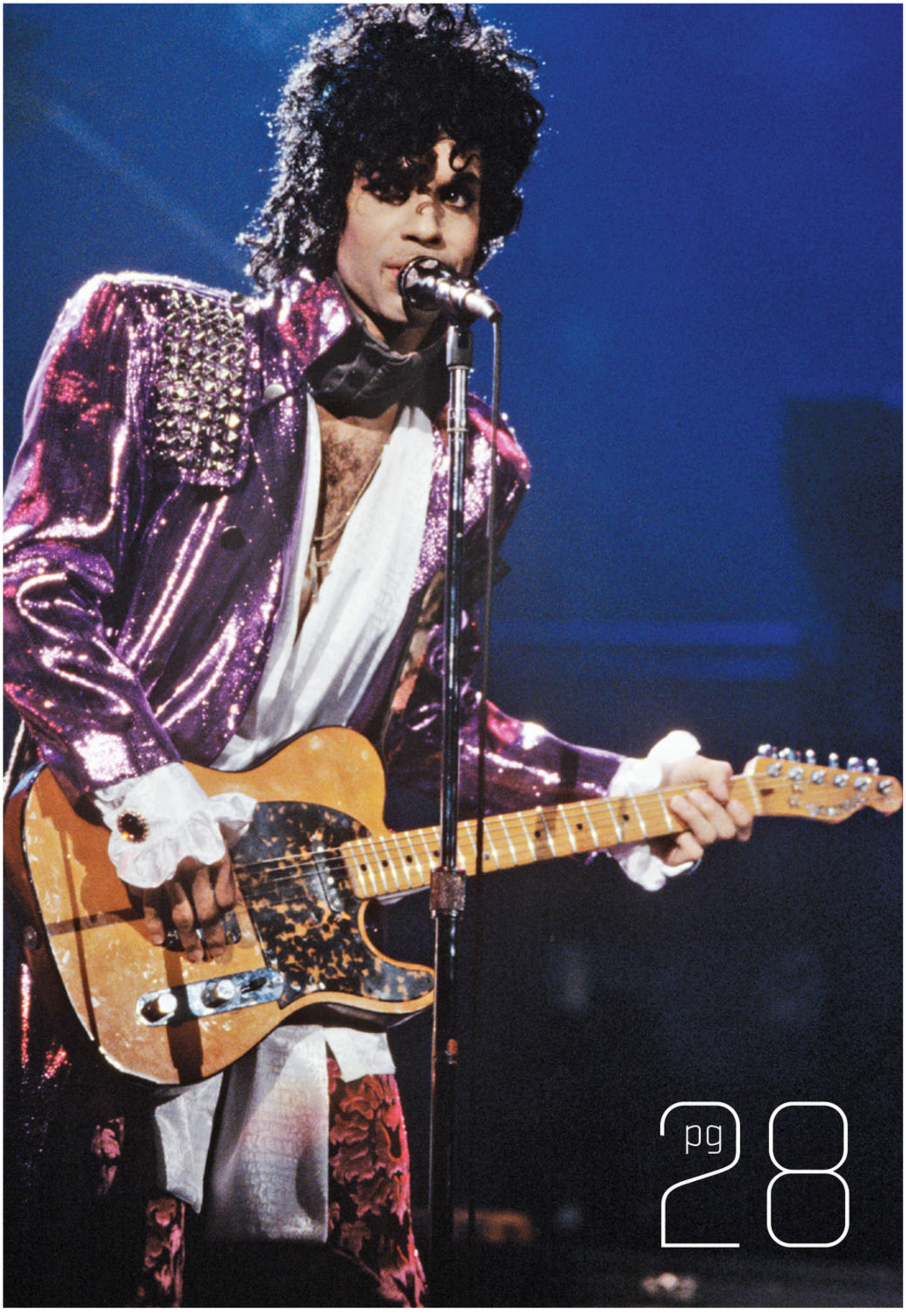

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Prince

COVER PHOTO BY **LYNN GOLDSMITH**

Yes, that beautiful.

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MASSIMO GAMMACURTA

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LETTER *from the* EDITOR

EXTRAORDINARY INDIVIDUALS inspire extraordinary stories. Unfortunately, one of music's most phenomenal personalities had his life cut short due to tragic circumstances that certainly weren't part of anyone's plans. When Prince died on April 21, 2016, from an overdose of prescription painkillers, it seemed like a cruel hoax, as Prince was never a drug abuser. Sadly, these deceptively powerful substances fooled a man who had spent his entire life in complete control, taking him away before he was anywhere near finished completing his life's work.

I was fortunate to briefly work with Prince in the late Eighties and early Nineties when I was an artist relations representative for Roland Corporation, and every encounter I had with him has an incredible story behind it. The most outrageous example was when he asked to purchase every GP-16 Digital Guitar Effects Processor that Roland had made because he wanted to be the only person who owned one. He even threw an multimillion-dollar offer on the table. Unfortunately, I was unable to satisfy that request, but I was happy to see that he was still using the GP-16 in his rig more than 20 years later, showing that he was truly serious about how much that effects unit meant to him.

Prince managed to entertain in ways far beyond his music and performances. In this issue, we take a closer look at one of those means—his incredible custom guitars. From his iconic Cloud guitar to the Jerry Auerswald creation shaped like Prince's unpronounceable "Love Symbol," Prince's guitars were designed to demand attention and capture the imagination. Alan di Perna's cover story on Prince's guitars offers insight into just a small part of an incredibly complex performer, but considering that Prince envisioned himself as a guitarist first and foremost, we couldn't think of a more appropriate way to pay our respects.

Prince was a true one-of-a-kind artist who left behind many secrets when he passed away. We had actually planned on doing a similar story on his guitars, but with input from the artist himself. Unfortunately, we lost the chance to do that. Events like Prince's death often remind us of important life lessons, but in this particular case of a life and career that was still reaching toward an elusive peak before it was cut short, we should all celebrate and experience what life offers today instead of unnecessarily putting things off until the future.

CHRIS GILL
Editor-in-Chief

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NEWBAY MEDIA, LLC
28 East 28th Street, 12th Floor
New York, NY 10016
www.nbmedia.com

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GUITAR AFICIONADO (ISSN 1949-0690) is published bimonthly by NewBay Media, LLC, 28 East 28th Street, 12th Floor, New York, NY 10016. Phone: 212.378.0400. Fax: 917.281.4704. Web Site: www.nbmedia.com. Newsstand distribution is handled by Time Warner Retail. Subscriptions: Basic rate (6 issues): US: $29.95US; Canada: $39.95US; Foreign: $44.95US. Canadian price includes postage and GST #R128220688. PMA #40612608. Subscriptions do not include newsstand-only specials. POSTMASTER: Send change of address to *Guitar Aficionado*, P.O. Box 469030, Escondido, CA 92046-9030. Returns: Pitney Bowes, P.O. Box 25542, London, ON N6C 6B2, Canada.

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McCarty 594

The 594 has subtle but significant differences from past McCarty models. The obvious changes are the new position of the pickup selector, the 58/15 LT (low turn) pickups with coil taps and a knob layout that feels like home to a lot of players. To find out what else we changed to make this guitar feel and sound like a worn-in vintage instrument that plays in tune and delivers modern reliability, visit our website. www.prsguitars.com

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Effects

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UNHEAVY METAL

OZZTOSH LUMA S

{ BY RICHARD BIENSTOCK }

BRIAN OSTOSH IS not your typical guitar builder. For one thing, he's never played guitar, though he is well versed in piano, marimba, flute, and piccolo. Furthermore, he spent much of his adult life working not in the MI industry but in aeronautics. After retiring a few years ago, he switched his focus to guitar making, a move that, in his estimation, is not as radical a shift as it may seem.

"I've always been fascinated with building things," he says. "When I was young it was surfboards, because I'm from Southern California. Then it was canoes. After that, aircraft." The connecting thread? "They're all hollow, lightweight structures," he continues. "So when it came to the guitar, I just used that same knowledge, even though I had never built a guitar in my life."

Given his unique background, it's hardly surprising that Ostosh's guitars, which he builds under the company name Ozztosh, are untraditional. Take the model shown here,

the Luma S, which, at first glance, bears a resemblance in shape, pickguard style, and pickup configuration to a Fender Stratocaster (hence the *S* in its designation). But the instrument's brilliant reflective surface is the first hint that this is not an ordinary electric guitar. Rather, every Ozztosh creation boasts a body crafted from 6061 aluminum alloy, the same material, Ostosh says, that is used in the construction of Boeing aircraft.

Of course, Ostosh is hardly the first builder to employ metals in his creations. But one of the more appealing aspects of his metal bodies, he says, is how thin he is able to cut them. "In my years in aeronautics I did a lot of molds for wings and wing tips and things where lightness is important," he says. "So I learned how to cut very, very light parts. I translated that machining knowledge to guitar bodies to keep the weight down. One thing I realized from looking at other aluminum guitars is that when you're coming from the world of wood construction, you design heavier pieces because you don't realize how strong aluminum is. But the strength of aluminum is phenomenal compared to, say, maple."

In Ostosh's guitars, the tops and backs are carved and partially routed from two 35-pound solid blocks of aircraft-grade 6061 aluminum billet and then joined together with machine screws. Inside, Ostosh explains, "a vertical wall keeps the top and back from collapsing," adding that he has received a U.S. Patent for the contiguous sound chambers resulting from the hollowed-out body cavity. As for what the chambered aluminum body offers in terms of tone? "I would say clarity, accuracy, distinctiveness," Ostosh says. "There's no absorption. I would compare it to a xylophone versus a marimba: wood key verses metal key. When I was younger I played in a

"PEOPLE DON'T KNOW IT'S METAL UNTIL THEY PICK IT UP, BECAUSE THE TONALITY, RICHNESS, AND CLARITY ARE SO INCREDIBLE."

marching band, and you could hear the guy with the glockenspiel over the other 120 instruments. That's the sound of metal."

Continuing the non-wood theme, the Luma S boasts a Moses Graphite neck and fretboard, while the pickguard is CNC-machined aluminum-alloy finished on this example in a blue-tinted polyurethane clear coat. Other features include a trio of Nordstrand NVS pickups ("their most basic duplication of the Stratocaster single-coils," Ostosh says), a Super-Vee BladeRunner bridge, Sperzel Trim-Lok tuners, a Graph Tech Tusq nut, one master volume and two tone knobs, and a three-way selector switch. The guitar shown here boasts a stunning basic polish finish, though, Ostosh says, "We can put any finish on the aluminum. We're experimenting with direct-embed coating, automotive paint, and laser etching. We can do things that are impossible with wood." That customization applies to every facet of an Ozztosh instrument, from pickup and pickguard options to guitar necks, which Ostosh recently began crafting from the same billet aluminum used for his bodies.

As for whether he believes tonewood purists will find his aluminum instruments appealing, Ostosh acknowledges that he is fighting traditionalists. "But when people hear the guitar first, they don't know it's metal until they pick it up, because the tonality, richness, and clarity are so incredible." And in some areas, he continues, aluminum is clearly superior to wood. "Sustain, for one—it's just incredible," Ostosh says. "And stability—we send these things cross-country by FedEx, and when they're picked up on the other end they're still in tune. They're rigid and they're not affected by humidity. They're ready to go at all times."

Ostosh is just getting started in his new career—at present he has built roughly 15 Ozztosh guitars in three different models—the Luma S, the Luma T (similar in shape to a Telecaster), and the Luma P-Bass. But he believes his guitar-building days will be somewhat limited, due to a degenerative eye disease that will eventually compromise his vision. "My plan is to get these designs out of my head, onto the computer, and into reality," he says.

To that end, he's currently working on a new design. "I'm developing an amp head chassis," he announces. "It'll be billet aluminum, shiny on the outside, and will absorb the heat from the tube. Hopefully we'll have that for the NAMM show next year. That's the next super-project to come."

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Ozztosh Luma Guitars, ozztosh.com

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{ ANNOTATIONS BY SCOTT HICKEY }

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(5940G-010)

A dark-blue moon phase delivers the only concession to color amid the striking monochromatic look of the voluptuous white-gold case and well-proportioned black dial. Art deco touches, like applied Breguet-style numerals, project timeless style, while the automatic movement appeals to horological purists with its perpetual calendar, a complication that automatically accounts for the irregular length of months and leap years.

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patek.com

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(PAM00655)

Descended from the robust timepieces Panerai made for the Royal Italian Navy during the Forties, the Radiomir is one of the most recognizable cushion-shaped watches in the world today. Even so, no one has seen anything quite like this distinctive model, which retains the dial's graphic design and luminous markers, but features them on a stark white dial, a rarity for Panerai.

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Watchmaker Laurent Ferrier started his company in 2010 after years at Patek Philippe, where he specialized in complicated movements. Today, connoisseurs celebrate the superlative quality and artistry of timepieces like his Galet Square. Its steel case—smooth like a pebble polished by time—houses a technically advanced in-house movement that uses a double, direct-impulse escapement to optimize both accuracy and efficiency.

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PHOTOGRAPHY BY MASSIMO GAMMACURTA

STILL LIFE

EXCITING BLENDS FROM COMPASS BOX PROVE THERE'S MORE TO SCOTCH THAN SINGLE MALT.

{ BY CHRIS GILL }

FOR MOST WHISKY connoisseurs, Scotch whisky begins and ends at Single Malt Scotch. Fortunately, drinkers with more adventurous and curious palates have recently discovered that there's much more to Scotch whisky than Single Malt. Recent ventures by David Beckham (Haig Club Single Grain) and pop producer Tommy D (808 Blended Grain) have helped bring attention to the virtues of Scotch grain whisky, but Compass Box (compassboxwhisky.com) truly leads the way when it comes to revealing how exciting and versatile Scotch whisky can be.

Founded in 2000 by American entrepreneur John Glaser, a former marketing director at Johnnie Walker, Compass Box is a blending house that produces a wide variety of Blended Malt, Blended Grain, and Blended (combining both malt and grain) Scotch whiskies. Although Compass Box is not a distillery, they are more involved in the whisky-making process than typical blending houses, aging sourced distillates in their own casks that they have specially selected for specific desirable flavor profiles.

Compass Box's five Signature Range and two Great King Street blends are all impressive, but their limited-edition blends showcase their most innovative and adventurous efforts. Hedonism Quindecimus ($200, 750ml), a Blended Grain Whisky bottled in celebration of Compass Box's 15th anniversary, goes well beyond their Signature Range Hedonism in terms of complexity, delivering an exciting and luxurious panoply of exotic flavors that include coconut, tropical fruits, burnt caramel, and baking spices. The base of Orangerie ($50, 750ml) is a blend of Highland Single Malt and Single Grain whisky from Fife, but because it's infused with hand-zested Navalino orange peel, Indonesian cassia bark, and Sri Lankan cloves, it can't technically be called Scotch whisky. Its refreshing orange and spice flavors make it an enticing after-dinner drink as well as a versatile base for innovative cocktails.

1932 L-00 Vintage

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VINTAGE

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BRUT FORCE

THE FINEST DINING IN FRANCE'S CHAMPAGNE REGION

{ BY MICHAEL COLAMECO }

LOCATED ABOUT 100 MILES east of Paris, Champagne is the northernmost region of France where winemaking grapes can be grown. The weather is almost never great there—it rains a fair amount, winters are cold, and summers can get very hot. Vineyards in Champagne are usually the last harvested every fall, and the harvest is done entirely by hand.

One notable characteristic of the region is the presence of thick deposits of limestone and chalk just beneath the soil. Champagne houses have carved caves into these deposits that maintain a perfect, cool environment with ideal humidity for aging the millions of bottles produced there annually. There are literally miles upon miles of wine stored underground in the region.

So after a day of vineyard tours and tastings in the Champagne region, where does one eat dinner if one wants to eat extremely well? I suggest the venerable Le Parc restaurant at Les Crayères (lescrayeres.com), located on the outskirts of the region's largest city, Reims. The setting is a grand old chateau amid a 17-acre park, whose gardens supply much of the restaurant's vegetables and herbs in season. The name comes from the term *crayères*, which are the underground chalk caves in which all Champagne wines are aged.

Many years ago, I dined at Les Crayères when the chef was the venerable local Gerard Boyer and his wife, Elyane, ran the dining room. At that time they held the highest rating of three Michelin stars. After Boyer retired in 2003, the restaurant was demoted to two stars. From 2004 to 2010, the talented Didier Elena, who previously worked for Alain Ducasse, ran the kitchen. When he left, so did both of those Michelin stars. In 2010, Chef Philippe Mille took over after working for years under Chef Yannick Alléno at the highly regarded Le Meurice in Paris. In 2011, Michelin awarded Les Crayéres one star, and in 2012 the second star followed.

The night I dined there, we were the guests of Champagne house Laurent-Perrier, so we enjoyed magnums of Laurent-Perrier Brut, their excellent Prestige Cuvée non-vintage Grand Siècle, and superb Alexandra Rosé Millésimé from the esteemed 2004 vintage. Most of us started the meal with a fat slab of sautéed foie gras set over pickled baby root vegetables with various herb blossoms from the garden out back. I opted for an Iberian pork chop and side of salt dough oven-charred white asparagus. Others had the roast squab with the breast sautéed medium rare and the leg braised and stuffed with yet more foie gras. Champagne is a very food-friendly wine, so I'm a big advocate of drinking it with dinner and not just before it.

The property is part of the Relais & Châteaux luxury hotel and restaurant fellowship. Should you desire to stay on the premises, rooms are available starting around $450 per night, or you can stay at a less expensive hotel in town and splurge on the amazing food and insanely deep 29-page Champagne list.

To get to the Champagne region, fly to Paris and either take the fast TGV train or drive an hour and half northeast to the historical town of Reims, which is centrally located in the heart of the region. A visit to the Champagne region should be on any wine-lover's bucket list, particularly if that trip includes a meal or two at Les Crayères. As the folks at Michelin say, it's worth a journey.

New York City–based chef and media personality Michael Colameco is the author of *Mike Colameco's Food Lover's Guide to NYC* and hosts *Colameco's Food Show* on PBS and the nationally syndicated radio program *Weekend Food*.

PHOTO COURTESY OF LES CRAYÈRES

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MISSING LINK

1939 SLINGERLAND SONGSTER MODEL 400

NO ONE KNOWS for sure how many Songster Model 400 electric guitars the Slingerland company made in the mid to late Thirties, but it probably wasn't very many. The electric guitar was still a brand-new phenomenon at the time, sales of guitars weren't particularly robust because of the Great Depression, and manufacturers were testing the waters carefully and conservatively.

But rarity alone is not what makes this Songster from the National Museum of American History's collection in Washington D.C. unusually fascinating. The Model 400 Songster is somewhat of an unsung hero in early electric guitar history, as it very likely could be the first-ever solidbody electric Spanish guitar to hit the market.

"It's an instrument that doesn't seem to get mentioned much when people discuss early electrics," says Monica Smith, head of exhibitions and interpretation at the museum's Lemelson Center for the Study of Invention and Innovation. "The Songster electric Spanish has been more of a recent discovery. Some people argue that it's the missing link between earlier electrics and more well-known solidbodies, such as Leo Fender's designs from the late Forties and early Fifties."

Rickenbacker's Bakelite Electro Spanish Model B from the mid Thirties was essentially a solidbody Spanish guitar. So were Lloyd Loar's ES designs for ViViTone, even if the solid body was just a narrow plank of wood. But the Songster, which Slingerland produced between 1936 and 1939, is the first production model that looks more or less like what we now think of as an electric Spanish solidbody guitar.

Several features, however, are unusual by today's standards. The pickup assembly is attached to a plate that screws into the body, and the pickup itself is made of six small, individual coils, which essentially makes it a six-coil humbucker. The coils are attached to a large horseshoe magnet which rests beneath the surface of the mounting plate. The metal piece, engraved with the Slingerland logo, that arches over the pickup is a hand rest—not part of the pickup itself. Among other interesting features, note that the volume and tone knobs are mounted on either side of the pickup, and the patch cord is hardwired to the instrument itself.

"The body is on the smaller side," Smith notes. "So a lot of people look at the guitar and think, 'Oh, it's a lap steel.' But no, it's a Spanish-style guitar."

Actually, Slingerland also offered a very similar lap-steel version of the Songster, the Model 401. But like the Model 400, there aren't a whole lot of them extant.

"Clearly, the focus on electric guitars wasn't there for Slingerland," Smith says. "They were principally a drum manufacturer, so this likely wasn't going to ever become their main business. But there's probably more of a story there than we realize today."

—Alan di Perna

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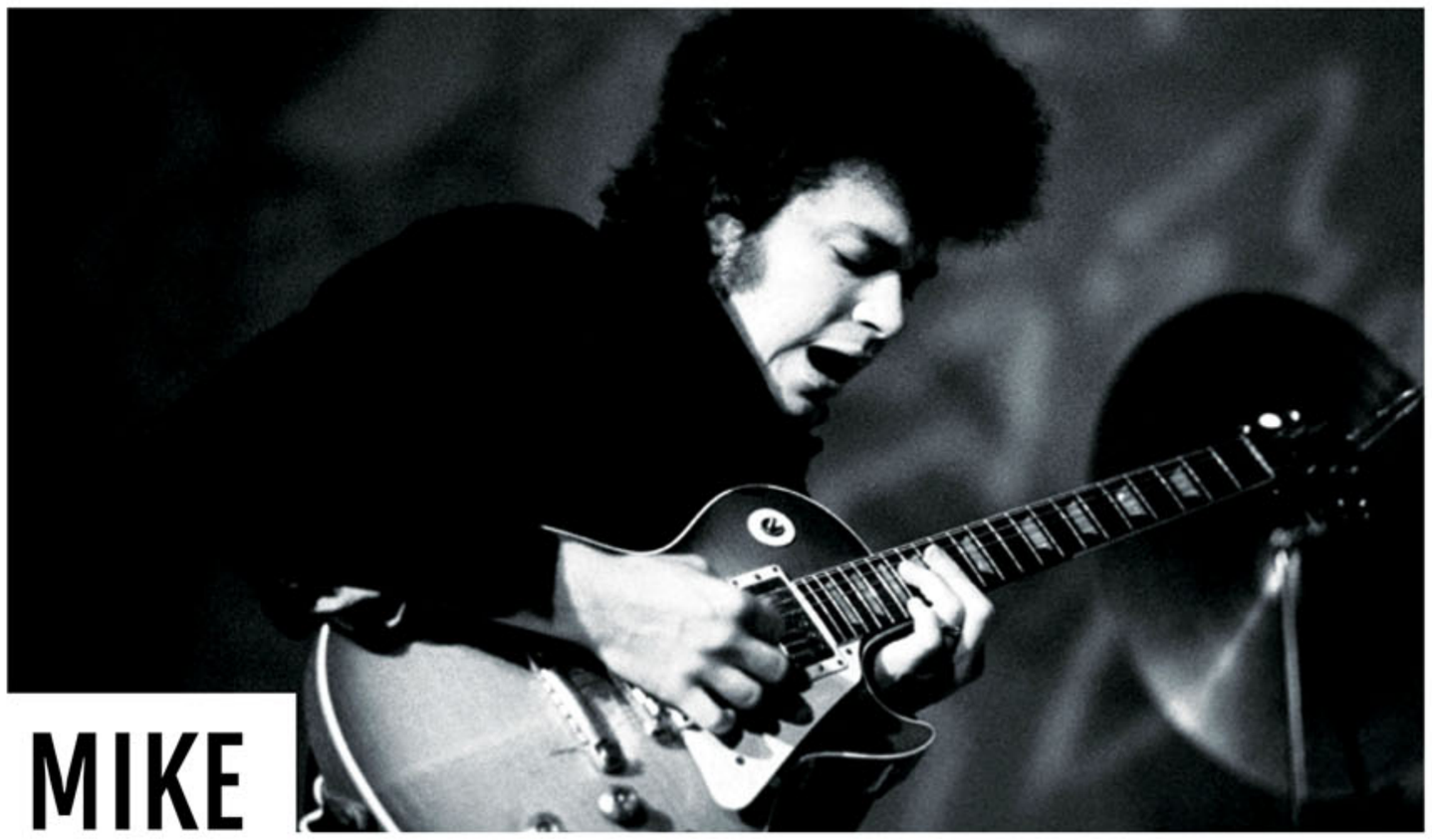
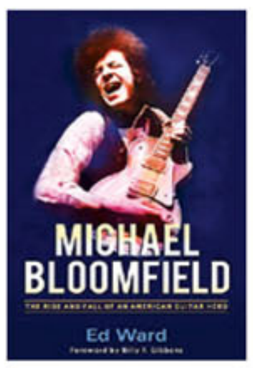


MIKE BLOOMFIELD REVISITED

CELEBRATED IN HIS TIME BUT NEARLY FORGOTTEN TODAY, MIKE BLOOMFIELD LIVES AGAIN IN THIS INTIMATE NEW BIOGRAPHY.

Michael Bloomfield: The Rise and Fall of an American Guitar Hero
By Ed Ward, Foreword by Billy F. Gibbons
Chicago Review Press ($26.99, 224 pages)



THOUGH HIS MUSICAL contributions are outshined today by his contemporaries like Eric Clapton and Peter Green, Mike Bloomfield was one of the most important electric blues guitarists of the day when he arrived on the scene in 1964. Just 21 at the time, Bloomfield provided a crucial bridge between the world of black elder bluesmen like Muddy Waters and Jimmy Rogers and the just-emerging breed of young players that included Clapton, Green, and Jimmy Page.

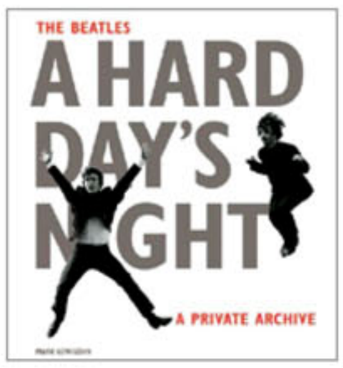
Unlike his more-traditional peers, Bloomfield played a unique style of the genre, blended from deep-fried Chicago blues and an electric freak-out frenzy suited to the Sixties' restless temperament. Bob Dylan recruited him to play on *Highway 61 Revisited* as well as to assemble a band when Dylan "went electric" at the 1965 Newport Folk Festival. He subsequently called Bloomfield "the best guitar player I ever heard." When Bloomfield considered quitting music in the late Sixties, it was B.B. King who telephoned and begged him not to.

It was a fitting tribute. Bloomfield earned his bona fides as a teenager in the blues clubs of Chicago, a white Jew conspicuous among the black patrons. There he earned the respect and friendship of giants like Waters and Howlin' Wolf. Years later, he would perform in one of the great biracial blues groups, the Paul Butterfield Blues Band, where he would use the blues as a platform for experimentation, preceding the pop-culture arrival of both Clapton and Jimi Hendrix.

But it was his participation in the 1968 *Super Session* album that sealed his reputation as a one of the era's great blues guitarists, while the cover photo of him playing his 1959 Les Paul Standard helped reinforce that model as the quintessential blues guitar, a concept initiated when Clapton used his 1960 Standard on the *Blues Breakers with Eric Clapton* album. Sadly, Bloomfield's popularity waned in the Seventies and his career hit a disastrous slump. In the end, he was done in by a deep heroin habit that killed him in 1981.

Though Bloomfield's legacy has not been well represented in print, this new biography from Ed Ward finally gives him his due. Originally released in a very limited edition in 1983, *Michael Bloomfield: The Rise and Fall of an American Guitar Hero* has been thoroughly revised and expanded. Based on extensive interviews with Bloomfield and those who knew him, it's an intimate and well-deserved portrait of a pioneer of blues-rock guitar. —*Christopher Scapelliti*

BOOK



A HARD DAY'S NIGHT: A PRIVATE ARCHIVE
By Mark Lewisohn
Phaidon Press ($125, 284 pages)
Released in 1964, the film *A Hard Day's Night* was the perfect encapsulation of the impact that the Beatles' sudden fame had both on them and popular culture. Now from Phaidon Press and Beatles historian Mark Lewisohn comes what may be the ultimate tribute to the film. Illustrated with 77 color and 246 black-and-white photos, *A Hard Day's Night: A Private Archive* is a deep collection of photographs and rare ephemera documenting the band on the film set and behind the scenes. Lewisohn's authoritative essay and lively captions provide context and explore the film's impact and enduring legacy while capturing its infectious energy and anarchic spirit.

ALBUM

RAMONES 40TH ANNIVERSARY DELUXE EDITION
The Ramones
Rhino Records ($51.99, 3 CD/1 180-gram LP)
The Ramones' self-titled 1976 debut album launched the punk rock scenes in America and Britain and went on to inspire countless bands that followed. Rhino Records is marking the 40th anniversary of the album's release with a comprehensive three-CD/one-album tribute. Packaged in a 12-inch-by-12-inch hardcover book, this limited-edition individually numbered set includes the original album in a remastered stereo version and a meticulously recreated mono mix pressed on 180-gram vinyl. Extras include rarities, unheard demos, and an unreleased live show from the Roxy in Hollywood from August 12, 1976, all produced, mixed, and mastered by the album's original producer and mixer, Craig Leon.

MICHAEL BLOOMFIELD: BARON WOLMAN VIA ATLAS ICONS IMAGES

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THE HARMAN STORE on Madison Avenue in NYC hosted a private event with Yankees legend Mariano Rivera that included a Q&A with sports broadcaster Dan Patrick. Guests enjoyed cocktails and hors d'oeuvres and demoed products including headphones, wireless speakers and state-of-the-art home theater systems from brands like JBL, Mark Levinson and Revel.

(from left) Amanda Wormald, HARMAN Manager, Retail Marketing; *GA* publisher Anne Triece; Jamie Feuss, HARMAN Director, Retail Store Experience; John Stamatis, HARMAN, VP Global Marketing

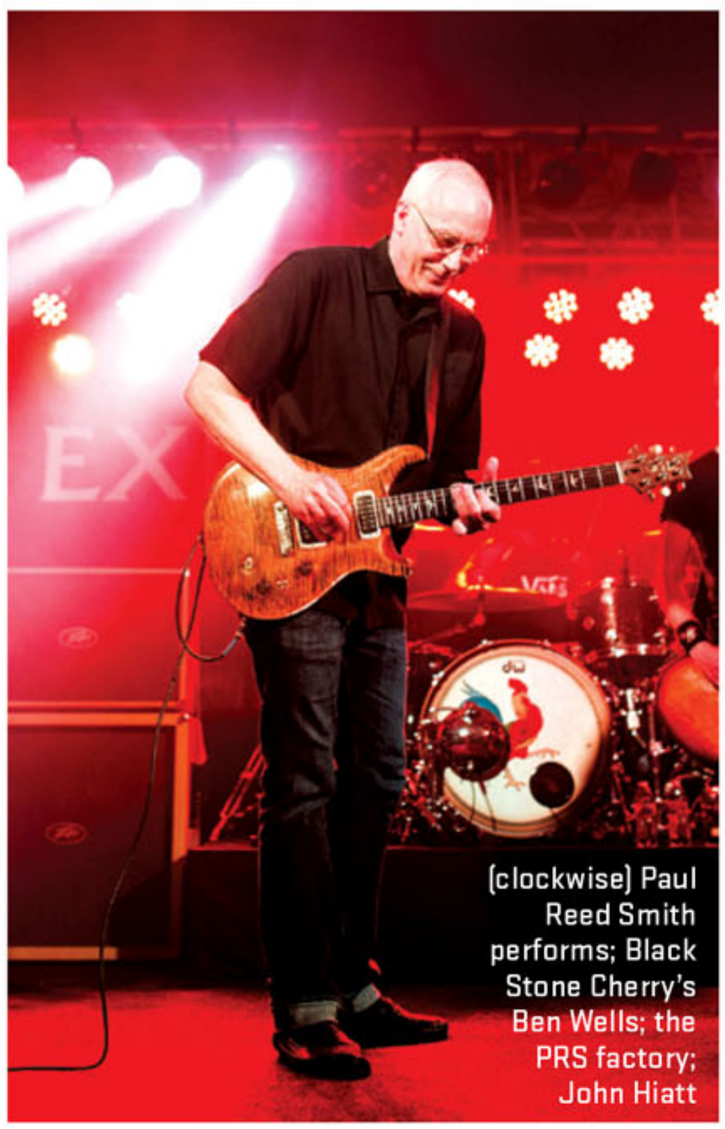
(right) Rivera and Patrick; (bottom) VIP gift bag with autographed baseball and Harman Kardon Esquire 2 portable bluetooth speaker

EXPERIENCE PRS

PRS GUITARS • STEVENSVILLE, MARYLAND • JUNE 3 & 4

GUITAR AFICIONADOS FROM around the world turned out in record numbers for Experience PRS this year. PRS Guitars' eighth open-house saw an impressive roster of A-list artists and special guests at the company's shop. PRS Signature Club Members were treated to a VIP event that included the now-traditional offering of an Experience PRS Limited-Edition guitar, which this year was a Custom 24-08 that adds a new electronics configuration to PRS Guitars' most classic model.

Experience PRS guests enjoyed performances by the Boscoe France Band, Black Stone Cherry, John Hiatt, and the Paul Reed Smith Band, which was joined by guitarists David Grissom, Whitesnake's Bernie Marsden, Emil Werstler, Simon McBride, and Prince/Justin Timberlake ax man Mike Scott for a gripping rendition of "Purple Rain." Vernon Reid and Living Colour closed the event with an hour-long performance that concluded with their hit "Cult of Personality."



(clockwise) Paul Reed Smith performs; Black Stone Cherry's Ben Wells; the PRS factory; John Hiatt

PHOTOS: HARMAN EVENT: JESSICA STERGIOU; PRS EXPERIENCE: PRS GUITARS

JEFF BECK

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THE BEAUTIFUL NES

BY ALAN DI PERNA

LIKE HIS MUSIC AND HIS INCREDIBLE LIFE CUT TOO SHORT, PRINCE'S GUITARS WERE WILD, WEIRD, AND WONDERFUL.

ALWAYS WANTED TO BE thought of as a guitarist," Prince told me in 1994. "But you have a hit, and you know what happens next."

In the weeks and months since the passing of Prince Rogers Nelson on April 21st of this year, countless commentators have analyzed his rich musical legacy from various perspectives. Journalists have riffed on Prince's in-your-face sexuality, his fluid sense of gender identity, his race, his bold fusion of multiple musical genres, and his larger-than-life role in the pop culture zeitgeist of the Eighties and beyond. All these approaches have been useful in shedding light on a complex and prodigious talent.

But a topic that might have been far closer to the late artist's heart is the guitar and his role in American vernacular music's vast tradition of guitar-wielding frontmen. Yes, the guitar was just one of 27 or so instruments that Prince played. But it was an instrument that occupied a central place in his music—a vital thread that runs through all the myriad stylistic shifts that defined a career spanning some 40 years.

Synth-pop hits like "Call Me" by Blondie, "Cars" by Gary Numan, and "Funky Town" by Lipps, Inc. dominated the charts in 1980 when Prince broke through with his Platinum-selling debut album, featuring the single "I Wanna Be Your Lover," and his follow-up album, *Dirty Mind*, released later that year. His guitar-driven music, based around tight grooves and dazzling showmanship, helped the guitar maintain a dominant role in funk, R&B, and pop during that period. Unlike the work of Talking Heads, Devo, or many other Eighties artists, there was nothing "deconstructed" or "ironic" in Prince's musical approach. Perhaps this is why he appealed to a much wider audience.

Prince's guitar playing was hot enough to inspire comparisons with Jimi Hendrix as well. He was a boldly original stylist and, like Hendrix, had a knack for fusing influences already in the air—R&B, hard rock, new wave, and dance music—in new and exciting ways. And he was certainly highly original in his choice of guitars.

Early in his career, Prince became attached to a fairly inexpensive Japanese Telecaster copy—the Hohner MadCat. He purchased the Hohner from Knut Koupee Music in Minneapolis in 1980, and it remained his main ax throughout his entire career, even well after he'd made enough money to fill a room with vintage Fender Teles. The MadCat's maple body has a shape identical to a Fender Tele body, but it has a thin strip of walnut running down the center, joining the two blocks of maple that make up the main body. The bridge is more like a Strat bridge than a Telecaster bridge, which contributes to the MadCat's slightly different tonality.

Prince loved the guitar so much that in 1984 he commissioned New York luthier Roger Sadowsky to make him two replicas of it. "The only thing that was at all different," Sadowsky says, "was that the top was flame maple with a hand-finished strip of walnut as the centerpiece."

Sadowsky's next commissioned work for Prince was a little more bizarre. Prince asked him to make two more Hohner Tele copies with an added feature: The guitars had to be working versions of a prop guitar that appears to ejaculate out of the headstock, which Prince used in in his film *Purple Rain*. Actually the white substance it spewed was Ivory dishwashing liquid, released by a valve fit into a cavity that was routed into the back of the prop guitar's body. All Sadowsky had to do was create two fully playable MadCats that could also cum on command.

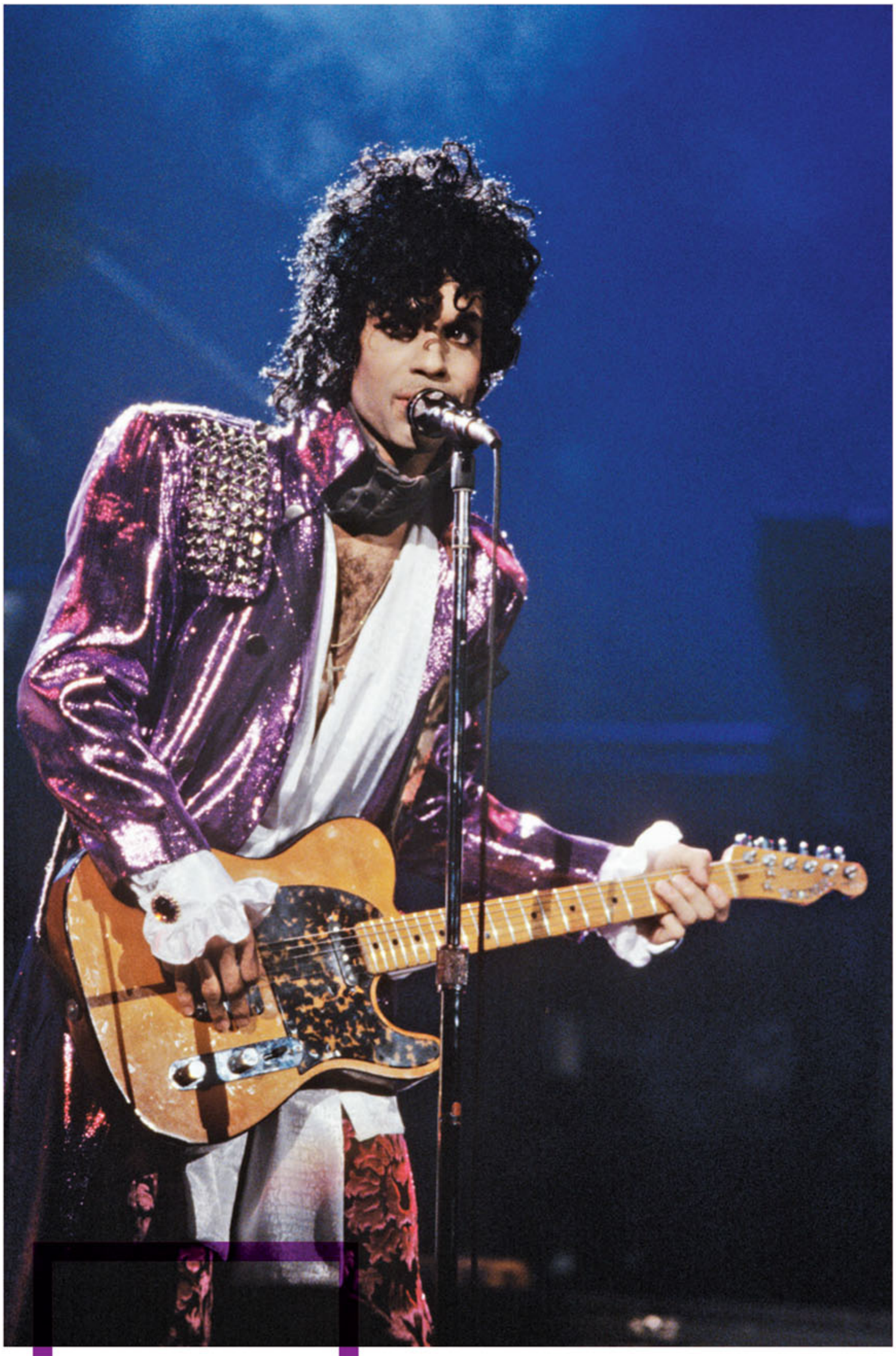
"We ran copper tubing inside the neck, alongside of the truss rod, that terminated right at the tip of the headstock," Sadowsky explains. "The tubing extended into the body, where we routed a cavity where they could retrofit their valve mechanism. And it had an extra hole in the side for the pressurized hose to come into that cavity and connect to the valve."

With all the guitars Sadowsky made for Prince, his actual interaction with the artist was minimal. This was a fairly typical situation with the eccentric superstar. Sadowsky remembers a meeting during rehearsals at an arena in Minneapolis."

"I had some questions about the neck profile," he recalls. "Prince was standing about 15 feet away, literally, with one of his bodyguards. I would ask a question, and Prince would whisper the answer to his bodyguard. The bodyguard would then walk over to me and tell me what Prince had said. That was exactly the extent of the communication."

It's not that Prince didn't like Sadowsky—he later commissioned the luthier to build two more Tele-style guitars with floral designs on the body and fingerboard.

One of Prince's main guitars early in his career was a customized Gibson L6S with flashing LEDs embedded in its top. (previous page) Prince with his custom "Love Symbol" guitar, built by German luthier Jerry Auerswald.



Prince with his Hohner MadCat at Detroit's Joe Louis Arena, November 8, 1984.

PRINCE'S GUITAR PLAYING WAS

HOT ENOUGH

TO INSPIRE COMPARISONS WITH JIMI HENDRIX.

The indirect-communication tactics were just part of the mystique he cultivated.

"He only wanted to go through a couple of key people in his organization," says Zeke Clark, Prince's mid-Nineties guitar tech. "If you were one of those people, you then had to deliver his message to everyone concerned. Sometimes people would say, 'Shit, why can't he just take this call himself? He's the one who's going to make the decision.' But he liked that sensibility of not being able to be reached quite so easily."

Prince soon moved to more original and unique custom designs. He had a working relationship with Dave Rusan from Knut Koupee that went back to Prince's pre-fame teen years, and eventually Prince hired Rusan to build custom guitars.

"Prince was still in high school when I first met him," Rusan recalls. "He had a big Afro, and he'd often come in to the store to try stuff. You could tell he was a virtuoso already, and he was only 18."

In 1983, while Prince was preparing to make his breakthrough film, *Purple Rain*, he commissioned Rusan to build him a wild new guitar that would be prominently featured in the film. It became known as the Cloud guitar, one of Prince's most iconic instruments. The design was loosely based on a bass built by Sardonyx luthier Jeff Levin that Prince had bought at Matt Umanov's guitar shop in New York. The unique body shape is notable for its dramatically extended upper horn, terminating in a fanciful, hand-carved scroll that's somewhat reminiscent of the Memphis style of furniture design in vogue at the time. The horn also seems an ideal visual analog for Prince's androgynous image. It's phallic, yet feminine.

A neck-through-body instrument fashioned from hard rock maple, the Cloud guitar is equipped with gold-plated hardware and EMG pickups, all in accordance with Prince's specifications. As was Sadowsky's experience, Rusan had minimal one-on-one contact with his elusive client during the making of the guitar. But Prince was apparently very pleased with the end result.

"We thought it was a guitar he was just going to use for the movie," Rusan recalls, "but then he started using it in live shows and he commissioned two more. All the ones I built for him were white, but they later were repainted in other colors."

Another 18 Cloud guitar replicas were subsequently made for Prince by Andy Beech and Zeke Clark. Beech did the woodwork, and Clark installed the electronics. It would become fairly standard practice for Prince to commission multiple copies of much-loved guitars. He played the instruments so aggressively onstage that he would wear them out. Also many were damaged onstage when he'd toss them in the air and let them crash to the ground. This became a sore point for Clark, given his role in making many of the replicas Prince played.

"I actually said to him, 'Hey, fella, a lot of love and work went into putting these together for you,'" Clark recalls. "'I think it's a little disrespectful that you just take it and toss it over your head.' And he said, 'Hey, Zeke, I understand where you're coming from. But that's me.'"

Like any successful guitarist, Prince amassed an impressive arsenal of working guitars—the usual array of vintage Les Pauls, Strats, and Epiphones, as well as a selection of Gibson, Guild, Takamine, and Taylor acoustics. Prince notably helped Taylor Guitars gain attention when

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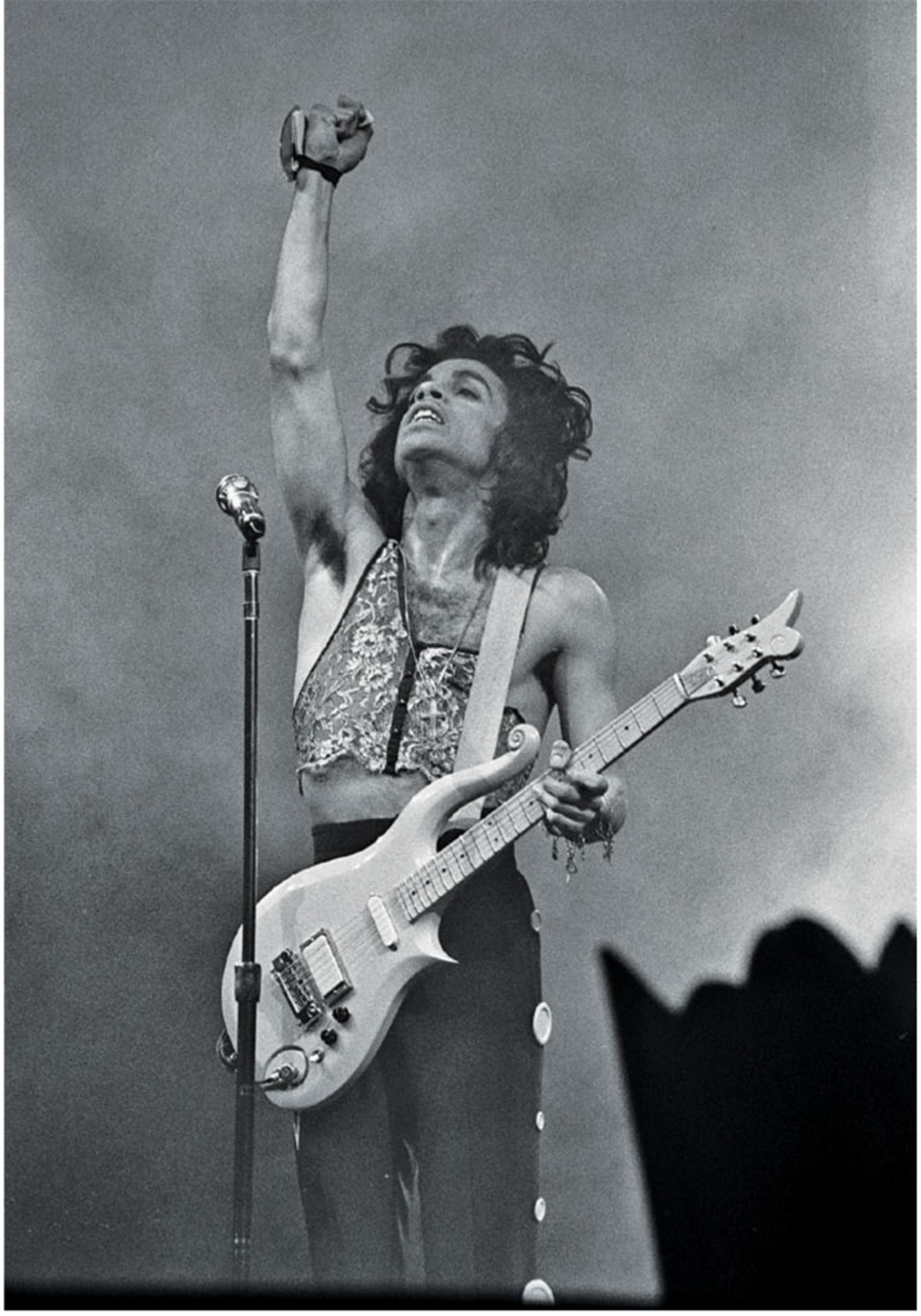

THE MADCAT AND CLOUD GUITARS WERE PRINCE'S MOST CONSPICUOUS INSTRUMENTS DURING

HIS GOLDEN ERA

OF CLASSIC ALBUMS.

(above left) The cavity for the valve mechanism in Roger Sadowsky's Hohner MadCat replicas. (below left) Sadowsky's custom Tele-style guitar with floral graphics. (center) Prince onstage with his Cloud guitar in the late Eighties. (right) This Cloud guitar made in 1989 by Dave Rusan is on display at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History.

his custom purple Taylor Artist Series guitar prominently appeared in the hands of Revolution guitarist Wendy Melvoin in his "Raspberry Beret" video in 1985. Prince also owned a custom-made electric sitar, and very early in his career he commissioned Knut Koupee to embed flashing LEDs along the body perimeter of a Gibson L6S that was his main guitar before he acquired the Hohner. According to Clark, Prince owned "anywhere between 60 and 70 guitars, including in his home, Paisley Park, various studios, and guitars on display at his Glam Slam clubs."

But the MadCat and Cloud guitars were his most conspicuous instruments during the golden era of classic Prince albums such as *1999*, *Around the World in a Day*, *Parade*, *Sign o' the Times*, and *Lovesexy*. As the Nineties dawned, though, Prince found himself increasingly at odds with his record label, Warner Brothers. The Number One hits weren't coming as fast or frequently as they once did, and Prince was starting to lose the absolute control he'd exerted over earlier albums, when his star was at its zenith. The basic issue was that the prolific artist was producing far more music than Warner felt it could feasibly and profitably release.

At the time, Prince had built three state-of-the-art recording studios inside his Paisley Park complex in Chanhassen, Minnesota, just outside Minneapolis. He originally intended to rent some of these spaces to clients, but all three wound up being more-or-less perpetually locked down with Prince's own projects. He'd bounce from one to the other on a 'round-the-clock basis.

"In the time I was with him," Clark says, "I worked seven days a week—18-hour days every single day I was there. That's how he was. He wasn't into drugs or anything like that. The guy was so focused. Whenever I'd introduce him to the latest harmonizer, fuzz, or wah, he'd play it and within 30 seconds he was master of it. He'd say, 'Okay, Zeke, I want to change the envelope in this one and change the resistors in that one. I want the sweep to start out at 800Hz and go up to 5kHz.' I've never seen anybody more tuned in to that stuff."

In an attempt to circumvent the restrictions of his Warner contract, Prince changed his name to an unpronounceable symbol. Whatever this may have accomplished as a career move, it also gave birth to another iconic custom Prince ax, known as the Love

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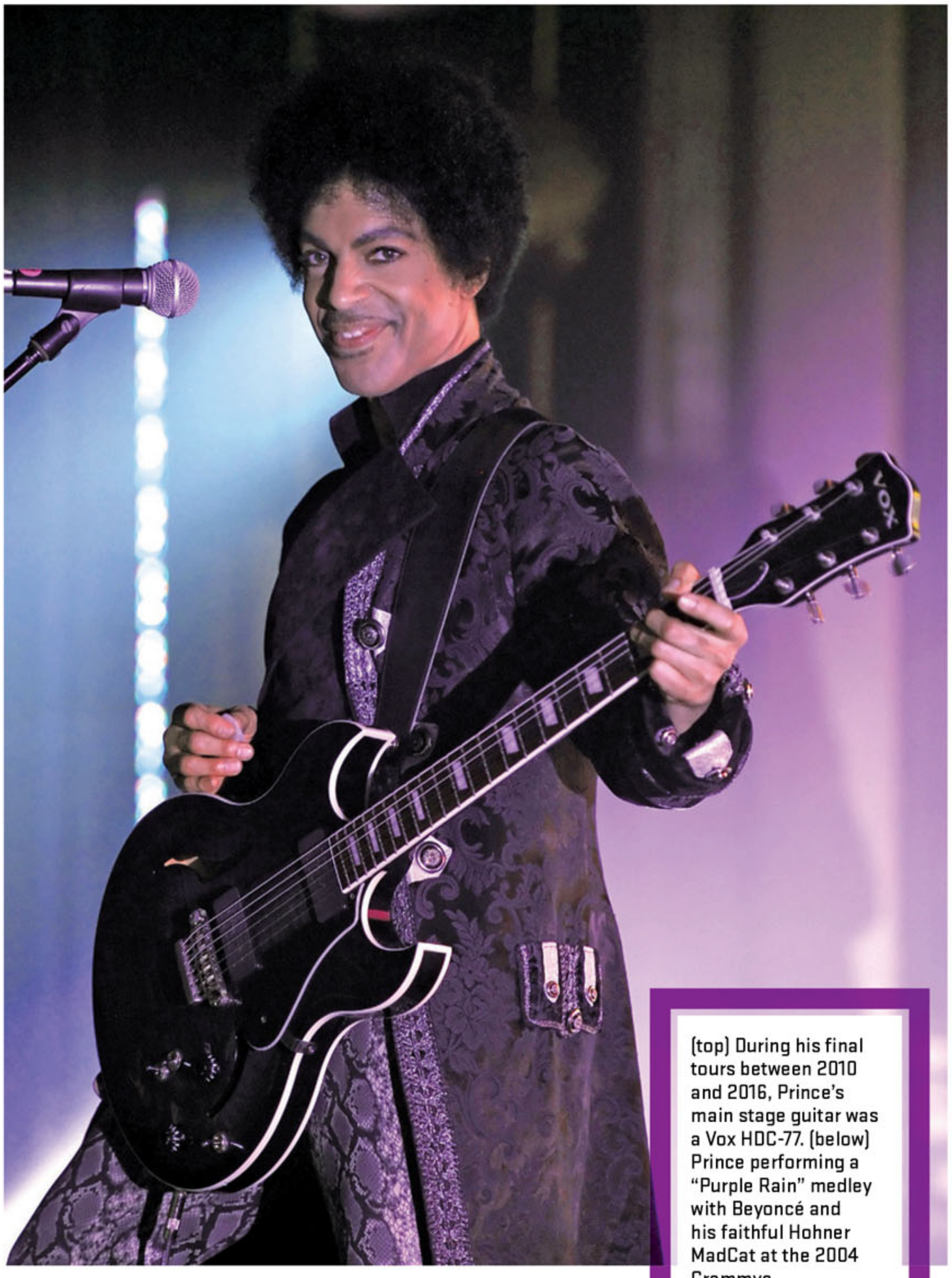
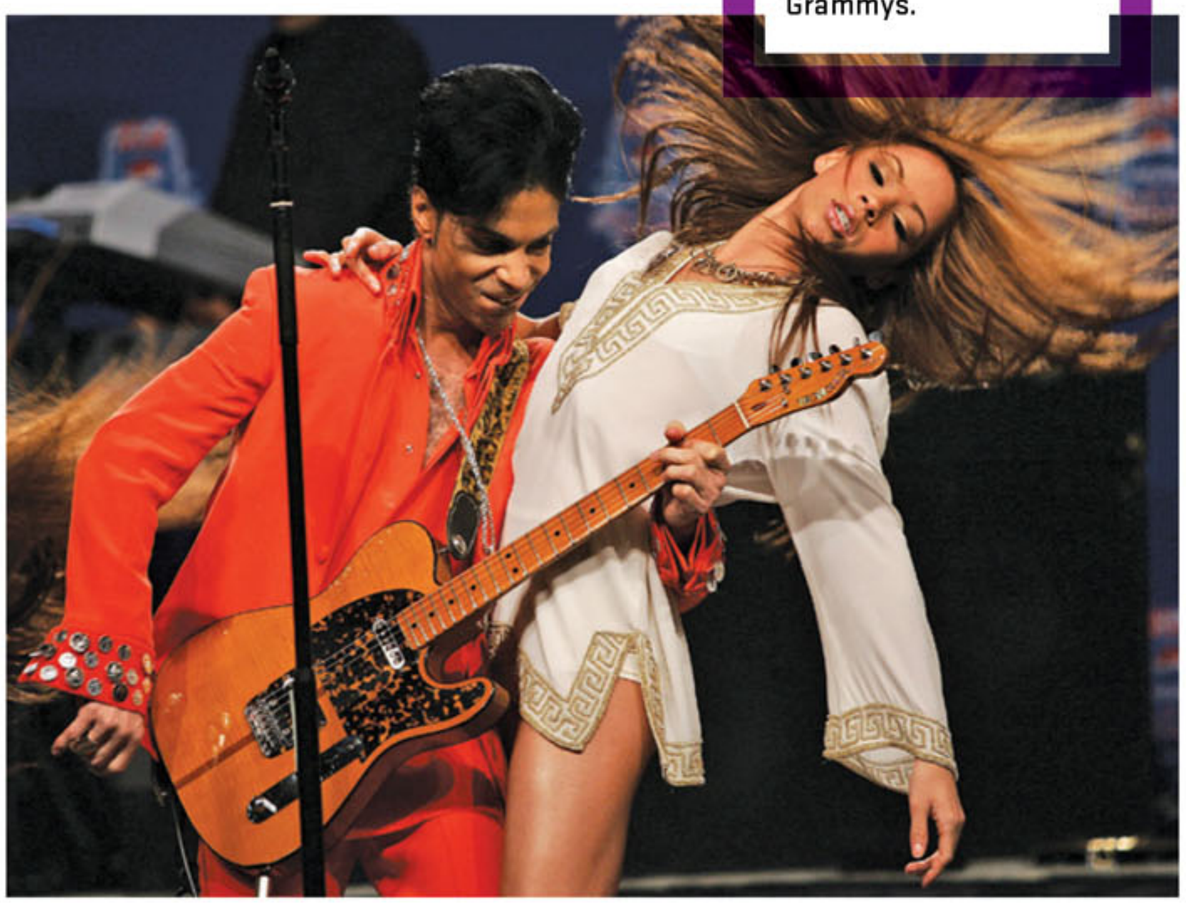


(top) During his final tours between 2010 and 2016, Prince's main stage guitar was a Vox HDC-77. (below) Prince performing a "Purple Rain" medley with Beyoncé and his faithful Hohner MadCat at the 2004 Grammys.



Symbol guitar. German luthier Jerry Auerswald, who Prince discovered after Princess Gloria von Thurn und Taxis gave him an Auerswald Model C guitar as a gift, received the commission for this instrument. Prince's instructions to him were characteristically terse. "I want it to look like my name," was all he said.

Auerswald responded with an instrument shape that closely replicates the unpronounceable, pseudo-hieroglyphic symbol that Prince had adopted as his new name. Clark acted as intermediary between the luthier and the newly rechristened artist.

"The body itself was cut out of rock maple that had been stored for at least 90 years," Clark says. "The neck was 120-year-old curly maple, and the fingerboard was an old piece of ebony. All parts were custom hand-made out of gold-plated brass and high-quality aluminum. We used EMG pickups, but it was a special winding from EMG, I remember."

Clark and Andy Beech also made several copies of the Love Symbol guitar. The instrument is closely associated with Prince's Nineties period, and made a dramatic "comeback" appearance when Prince performed a duet with Beyoncé Knowles on a *Purple Rain* medley at the 2004 Grammys. Schecter also made several backup Love Symbol guitars that Prince played onstage, as well as authorized copies of the Cloud guitar that were sold to fans via Prince's website and at his concerts.

Various other guitars appeared in Prince's hands onstage during the Nineties through the new millennium. In television appearances he was often seen playing a variety of customized Fender Stratocasters featuring an unconventional bridge humbucker/neck single-coil pickup configuration instead of the standard three-pickup designs. He also occasionally favored an Ibanez George Benson hollowbody electric jazz guitar and performed acoustic arrangements of his hits accompanied by a variety of new custom acoustic models made for him by Taylor (finished in purple, of course). Starting in 2010, a variety of Vox HDC-77 guitars, including one with a custom graphic finish, joined his mainstay Hohner as his main guitars for live performances.

The final custom guitar in Prince's life was made by British luthier Simon "Gus" Farmer—a streamlined, post-modern, purple and gold ax with a carbon-fiber body. It reputedly is the new guitar that Prince showed to guests at a dance party held at Paisley Park on April 16 of this year. He left it in the case, saying, "I can't play the guitar at all these days." After a solo piano performance that same night, he told the audience, "Wait a few days before you waste your prayers."

These typically cryptic statements turned out to be sadly prophetic. Five days after the show, Prince was found dead at Paisley Park. Thanks to his prolific output during a career unexpectedly cut too short, as well as a vast treasure trove of unreleased recordings stashed in the vault at Paisley Park, his work will live on for decades to come. GA

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BIG EASY ACTION

A VISIT TO THE **NEW ORLEANS JAZZ & HERITAGE FESTIVAL** IS AN OPPORTUNITY TO SOAK UP THE CITY'S LEGENDARY MUSIC, TANTALIZING FOOD, AND UNCOMMON FASCINATION WITH VOODOO.

story by JOSH MAX

photography by DANIN DRAHOS

Jim James of My Morning Jacket during the band's headline set on the Gentilly Stage.

For a premier jazz event, the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival has the odd habit of welcoming mainstream performers who have nothing to do with jazz or New Orleans. Witness the 2014 event, which included Bon Jovi among its main acts; or last year's celebration, where the Who and Lenny Kravitz took turns on the mainstage. This year's festival, held April 22 through May 1, featured non-jazz headliners like the Red Hot Chili Peppers, Pearl Jam, and Snoop Dogg.

But *jazz*, as defined by Webster, is a fitting term when applied to this chaotic, over-the-top, anything-goes festival, which drew 425,000 fans over this year's 10-day run. At times it can become a quasi-quadrophonic experience, with, for example, locals Keith Frank & the Soileau Zydeco Band performing to one's left while the soulful blues of the Delgado Brothers is blasting from the right. A marching brass band surrounded by an entourage of inebriated festivalgoers may bump you from behind as you watch Van Morrison do his thing on the mainstage. There are no dull moments. It's all stimulation, all the time, and you get your money's worth.

A mere 350 people attended the festival's humble 1970 launch, headlined by jazz giant Duke Ellington and gospel legend Mahalia Jackson. Today, 46 years later, the event has mushroomed into the second-largest tourist attraction in New Orleans, bested only by Mardi Gras. Both events, naturally, draw every type of human being you can imagine, from party animals to sophisticated connoisseurs; from the scantily clads to those with 20-foot hairdos; from young to old to black to white to sober to trashed.

The unexpected headliner for 2016, though, was rain—or rather the apocalyptic billion gallons of water dumped over the city and the festival at various points over the 10 days we spent in Louisiana. When downpours weren't canceling Stevie Wonder and Beck due to flooding, there were acres of deep mud to slip-slide away in as Paul Simon took the stage. And when the lucky ol' sun did peek its head out, it turned you lobster red wherever you didn't apply sunscreen. It was down 'n' dirty, spiritual, deafening, and wet, and it was a blast.

Then there was the city of New Orleans itself, equally spirited and equally wet at times, but not quite so deafening. This was my maiden voyage to the Big Easy, and I made the decision, while installed at the elegant, historic Bourbon Orleans Hotel, to neither consult a map nor take any form of public transportation. I had new birthday sneakers and intended, after witnessing the intensity of the 20 square blocks surrounding my hotel in the famed French Quarter, to explore my new world street by street, store by store, shrimp by shrimp, and band by band.

There are hundreds of eateries in NOLA, as well as the usual "Things to See," local debaucheries, and curiosities that cater to tourists. The Shops at Canal Place & Movie Theaters, Audubon Aquarium, World War II museum, and Natchez Steamboat are just a few major attractions, along with Harrah's Casino, the Audubon Insectarium, and the St. Charles Street Car Line.

Where, then, is the city's colossal musical heritage best observed outside the festival? Certainly not on Bourbon Street, with its dreadful cacophony of massacred classic rock applauded by inebriated yahoos. The answer is "all around." Take the Old U.S. Mint, for example, located at the French Quarter's north edge. There, with a walk and a keen eye, you can see and hear the history of all the sounds born in New Orleans, from Negro spirituals, Dixieland, and ragtime to Jelly Roll Morton's blues. Street bands comprised of banjos, sousaphones, trombones, clarinets, brushes, and such are plentiful, and many are world class, routinely drawing huge crowds while their members barely acknowledge those outside their circle. The musicians are there not to clown but to play, and they take it seriously.

The classically elegant, marble-laden Bourbon Orleans Hotel was a welcome refuge from the street madness. Known as the Orleans Ballroom when it opened in 1817, it became 10 years later the state and house legislative meeting place. In 1881, it was bought by the First Order of Negro Catholic Nuns and used as a convent and orphanage until 1964, when a local developer purchased the lot, restored the building, and opened for business.

Aside from its spacious, elegant lobby, the hotel's main attraction is its central courtyard, whose center point is a large, clean, heated pool that's visible from most rooms. Here, far from the madding crowd, one can think, chill, contemplate, and recharge before diving back onto the street or to the festival. If you're still not ready to brave Bourbon Street when night falls, the hotel's adjacent Bourbon O Bar beckons you to lounge on oversized comfy sofas, sip their signature Midas Cup made of fresh pureed strawberries, cognac, and champagne, and, on weeknights, listen to Dixieland jazz. Step in front of the building and a taxi appears, as if by magic. You may find larger or smaller or cheaper or more expensive lodgings, but the Bourbon Orleans is undeniably right smack in the center of the action and is therefore ideal.

If you happen to get your fill of bars, festivals, or the streets and wish to cleanse your soul's palate with some kind of velocity, the newly opened NOLA Motorsports Park will get your speed groove on with its Xtreme Xperience. A quick 20 or so minutes from the French Quarter (depending on traffic), the park operates under a slight Louisiana handicap, that being the flatness of the real estate, which hinders water from draining off the track. On the day I visited the park to step on the gas pedals of a Lamborghini LP 560-4, a Ferrari 458 Italia,

"IT WAS DOWN 'N' DIRTY, SPIRITUAL, DEAFENING, AND WET."

(opposite) Dixieland jazz at the Bourbon O Bar; (clockwise from left) Aspiring chefs sneak a peek; the Bourbon O Bar; Carl Broemel of My Morning Jacket; Lamborghini LP 560-4

and a Porsche 911 GT3, an ark would have been the best way to get from downtown to the track. Once again, the skies had other plans for us, it seemed. Thankfully, by the time we arrived, the sun had returned and evaporated most of the H2O, save for the odd puddle. I got behind the wheels of these three cars in an express version of this new playground, and off we sped.

You don't need to know how to drive a standard shift—every car is equipped with wheel-mounted paddles, which take almost no time to learn, or you can just go automatic. If you're a novice unfamiliar with anything more powerful than, say, a Prius, fear not: "Ride-Along Discovery Laps" are included for each driver in the Supercar Track Xperience, one of several packages the track offers, and you can dip your toe for a mere $99.

Go-karts are also available if you're into that sort of thing, and when you're through at the track you'll have a more badass selfie than that one you took with your arm around that lady outside the Cat's Meow with the 50-foot-high hair and silver-spangled dress and who charged you a buck for the privilege.

Of course, no musical odyssey to New Orleans would be complete without a search for the notorious House of the Rising Sun. Where exactly is it, and what is this landmark? The answer is that no one is entirely sure. Like the preponderance of Rick's Cafés all over Casablanca, each claiming to be the one made famous in the iconic 1942 film starring Humphrey Bogart, the legend of the House of the Rising Sun is as much myth as fact.

A claim, however, has been laid by Wendy Portier Herridge of Louisiana and Kevin Herridge of Romford, London, in the House of the Rising Sun Bed and Breakfast. The dwelling was built in 1870, destroyed once after the Great Fire of Algiers in 1895, and damaged anew by Hurricane Katrina in 2005. The repaired inn has 11-foot ceilings, pine floors, and swing benches on the front and back porches. Eric Burdon has stayed there on numerous occasions, and if it's good enough for the guy who belted out "Mother, tell your children not to do what I have done," it's good enough for the rest of us.

New Orleans has managed the unique feat of changing with our ever-more-rushed, net-infested lives, but it has also remained its traditional self without trying too hard. The city is rooted to its truly glorious, innovative musical traditions encompassing jazz, blues, Cajun, and other music of the people, without which rock and roll might never have been born at all. For that, we are eternally grateful. GA

DARKNESS ON THE EDGE OF TOWN

NEW ORLEANS IS RIFE WITH POCKETS OF ESTABLISHMENTS CATERING TO THOSE FASCINATED BY THE DARK SIDE. HERE ARE A FEW CHOICES.

DIG A NOLA CEMETERY

New Orleans' colorful, popular cemeteries lie mostly above ground in crypts and mausoleums due to the water table lurking just a few feet below the earth. The most-visited bone yard is the St. Louis Cemetery No. 1 on Basin Street. It's walk-able from the French Quarter and is the burial place of Marie Laveau, the notorious "voodoo queen." Thousands make the pilgrimage here each year to give offerings to her spirit in return for good luck.

Many other world-famous New Orleanians are buried there too, including 19th century chess champion Paul Morphy, Homer Plessy of the landmark Supreme Court segregation decision Plessy v. Ferguson, and members of Impressionist artist Edgar Degas' New Orleans-based family. Visitors can view other cities of the dead, some via Google-able guided tours, and tour the tombs of mayors, gamblers, jazz musicians, heroes of the War of 1812, and even actor Nicolas Cage, who ponied up for the construction of a strange-looking pyramidal tomb for his own eternal resting place.

THAT VOODOO THAT YOU DO

As you might expect, NOLA's number-one voodoo shop bears Marie Laveau's name, the better to elevate it from some of the town's cheap and more gimmicky shops. It's an unassuming, non-glitzy, dimly lit store where you can quietly browse at leisure and contemplate your particular life's puzzle and its possible cures. Unlucky in love? Want more cash? Does an ex wish you harm? These and other maladies can be countered by, say, a dried raccoon penis bone on a string, "money oil," or even an old-fashioned voo-doo doll (pins not included). T-shirts, mugs, and souvenirs abound as well.

Marie Laveau's House of Voodoo, 739 Bourbon St. (504) 581-3751

DEATH AND COMPANY

The Museum of Death's 1995 launch dated at the dawn of the worldwide Internet revolution, which, you might assume, makes it redundant for anyone wishing to see the work of Charles Manson's minions or correspondence from serial killers, all of which can be Googled at leisure. Where the MOD excels is in its stark depiction of uncensored life from long ago. Macabre artifacts like a Civil War amputation kit, embalming machines from the 1800s, and an ancient autopsy table are just a few of the stark reminders of what awaits us, no matter how much brown rice or yogurt we consume. You'll also find a variety of skeletons including not just human but also cat, hippopotamus, horse, goat, and dog, as well as various pickled critters, mounted heads, pig embryos, sheep brains, and more. Finally, believe it or not, the museum is tasteful—more a study in how humans treat each other than a gratuitous, morbid gape-fest.

Museum of Death, 227 Dauphine St. (504) 593-3968

The Italian Benevolent Society Tomb at the St. Louis Cemetery No. 1

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WORDS BY CHRIS GILL • PHOTOGRAPHY BY TY MILFORD

GUITAR AFICIONADO
45
SEPT·OCT 2016

"When you find yourself writing songs like 'Everybody Use Your Goddamn Turn Signal,' it's a clue that you need to walk a little more and drive a little less," Paul Gilbert says. Comfortably reclining in a chair in the studio inside his new home in Portland, Oregon, Gilbert seems like the usual affable, friendly, and humorous person he's always been since he first came to prominence in the guitar community with the Hollywood shred metal band Racer X in the mid Eighties. However, that song title—from his new album, *I Can Destroy*—and a similar sentiment expressed as the title of his 2006 album, *Get Out of My Yard*, suggest Gilbert could be entering a grumpy-old-man phase.

Fortunately, he hasn't turned into a cantankerous complainer; rather, the song title was inspired by one of the main reasons Gilbert wanted to leave behind the traffic-clogged, slow-moving "fast lane" lifestyle of his former Los Angeles home and settle in Portlandia. "I was spending too much time in my car in Los Angeles," he explains. "So I moved to a place where I could walk to just about everything. I hardly ever get in the car now."

While the pace of life may seem slower in Portland, the move made it easier for Gilbert to maintain and possibly even increase his industrious work schedule. Since leaving hard-rock supergroup Mr. Big in 1997, he's released 14 solo albums, two live albums, and an EP. He's also been productive as a guitar educator, posting a mind-boggling 4,000 videos on the ArtistWorks Video Exchange during the four years he's been an instructor for the acclaimed online school. Gilbert recently hosted his third Great Guitar Escape, a week-long "camp" filled with guitar seminars, jams, and performances, held each summer in Cambria, California.

At a time when many guitar heroes seem embarrassed to even admit that they play the instrument, Gilbert is unapologetic about his love of guitar. This is most evident in the stunning solos prominently featured on his new album, even in the middle of well-crafted pop songs. "There's certainly a fair share of widdly-widdly shredding on this record," he admits. "*I Can Destroy* may not be an instrumental shred guitar album, but it's not exactly a Dire Straits record either. I'm unusually blessed to have an audience that includes everyone from people who want to hear my athletic guitar stuff to fans who know me best for the hits I recorded with Mr. Big. I'm a people-pleasing person, so I want to make sure that everybody is happy."

On most of his albums since 2009's *United States*, Gilbert has worked with a second guitarist, either Freddie Nelson or Tony Spinner. On *I Can Destroy*, he decided to work with both. "They're both around my age and grew up with Seventies-era rock," Gilbert says. "The first thing I did for this album was hire Kevin Shirley as the producer. I've worked with him before, so I know the kind of energy that he likes to get and record. When you work with Kevin, the music really needs to work live, and you need to capture everything within a couple of takes, because he doesn't like to do a lot of overdubs. Because of that, I put together a really good band that knows how to play live and listen to each other to make things come together quickly."

Gilbert recorded most of the album with three of his Ibanez signature model guitars: two Fireman models and a violin-shaped PGM700. For several tracks, he dug into his deep collection of semihollow, archtop, and acoustic guitars, such as the Arnold Hennig steel-string flattop he played on "Love We Had" and the thinline hollowbody Ibanez ASF-180 he used for a cover of Ted Nugent's "Great White Buffalo." While his collection is constantly changing—he sold a bunch of his oddball Sixties Japanese guitars a few years ago, only to replace them more recently with jazz guitars and acoustics—one mainstay is his various Ibanez instruments, including Gilbert's namesake models and prime examples from the Seventies.

"Ibanez has been great to me since I started working with them in 1987," he says. "It's one of the longest and best relationships I've had outside of my parents and sister. They're great people who make great instruments."

However, Gilbert's enthusiasm for Ibanez instruments at one point overwhelmed the company's designers and custom shop craftsmen. "For the new millennium, I was playing a show at the Tokyo Dome," Gilbert recalls. "I had Ibanez make me this light-show guitar in the shape of the number 2000. After that, I called my friend at Ibanez to tell him about another idea I had, and he asked me to use a body style that already existed as a favor to him. Somehow that limitation made me really want to tweak the design. I really liked the Iceman, so I flipped the body shape over in Photoshop and added a cutaway at the treble bout. I loved the way it looked, and that design became the Fireman.

"I was aiming for a Sixties-style, funky import guitar look," he continues, "but it ended up being a really nice instrument. It feels and sounds great. I've played other Fireman guitars that people have brought to clinics, and they always resonate nicely and consistently sound good. I'm hoping that players of other styles of music will play it. I'd really love to see Vince Gill play country on one. It works for any genre of music."

Gilbert's approach to guitar design could be considered similar to his approach to songwriting—he takes something familiar, flips it over and turns it into something new. Instead of chasing trends like some guitar heroes have recently done in misguided attempts to stay relevant, he is unrepentant about his love for late-Sixties and Seventies rock. In fact, his love of those styles of music is his primary motivation for being a dedicated and fastidious instructor.

"When I'm gone, I want this music to still exist," Gilbert says. "If an asteroid were ever to hit the earth, I'd want the Beatles catalog to be preserved. Put it on a satellite and send it into space. To me it's such an important work of humanity. Of course, there's so much other great music and art. What happened in the late Sixties and Seventies with Jimi Hendrix, Jimmy Page, and Eddie Van Halen left a very big mark in guitar playing. Today, players are going somewhere else, but I really don't want what happened in the late Sixties and Seventies to be lost. I want to put that in somebody else's hands so they can carry that torch. Everybody has an expiration date, but I want the music to carry on, regardless. When I teach it, there's a greater chance that those styles of music will live on."

IBANEZ PGM700

"This has the fake f-holes that I came up with in 1991 to differentiate my first Ibanez signature model [*the PGM100*] from Steve Vai's JEM, which had the same body style. Even though the f-holes are not real, they took the look in a different direction than the usual pointy Strat. F-holes make me think of jazz, because you see f-holes on jazz guitars, and violins have f-holes, so I think of classical music too. The PGM700 was released as a limited production model in Japan in the Nineties. The violin-shaped body is inspired by Paul McCartney's Hofner bass."

IBANEZ PAT METHENY PM100

Gilbert's PM100 is a modified variant with an extra humbucker at the bridge, a three-way pickup selector in the volume control position, and a master volume at the tone control position. "Real hollowbody guitars are feedback monsters. The guys at the Ibanez custom shop taught me George Benson's trick of using clear packing tape to cover the f-holes. The tape holds the sound waves inside and keeps the guitar's top from vibrating too much. Then you can really rock out and use lots of distortion."

KIKUSUI SAKE IBANEZ CUSTOM SHOP FIREMAN

"When you see all the sake bottles at a Japanese grocery store, the Kikusui bottles always stand out. I thought that the bottle was really beautiful, so I decided to make a guitar inspired by it. We used the bottle caps as control knobs and incorporated the same graphic designs throughout. It's one of my few guitars that doesn't have a scratch on it. It's so beautiful that I'm scared to take it on the road. If I scratched it I think that I would cry."

IBANEZ 2457

"That's basically a copy of a Gibson ES-355. It might have had a whammy bar on it at one time but now it has a trapeze tailpiece. It's an awesome guitar. I remember being in Japan and thinking it would be nice to own a vintage ES-355, but they're, like, $12,000 dollars. I got this for less than $1,000, and it plays great, sounds great, and it's my brand."

IBANEZ AS103

"I used this guitar for a short tour that I did with Yellow Matter Custard, a Beatles tribute band featuring Mike Portnoy, Neal Morse, Kasim Sulton, and myself. I wanted the guitar to look similar to John Lennon's mid-Sixties Epiphone, so the Ibanez custom shop made a special pickguard with a big letter *I*, installed gold top-hat knobs, and made other small changes to the plastic hardware to get it looking closer to Lennon's guitar. The original shell fretboard inlays were quite ornate, so I covered them with tape to give the markers a simpler appearance."

IBANEZ 2630

"The 2630 is one of the best-sounding guitars I own. The neck is just the right amount of baseball-bat thickness, and it plays great. This is from the late Seventies, when Ibanez started entirely making their own designs."

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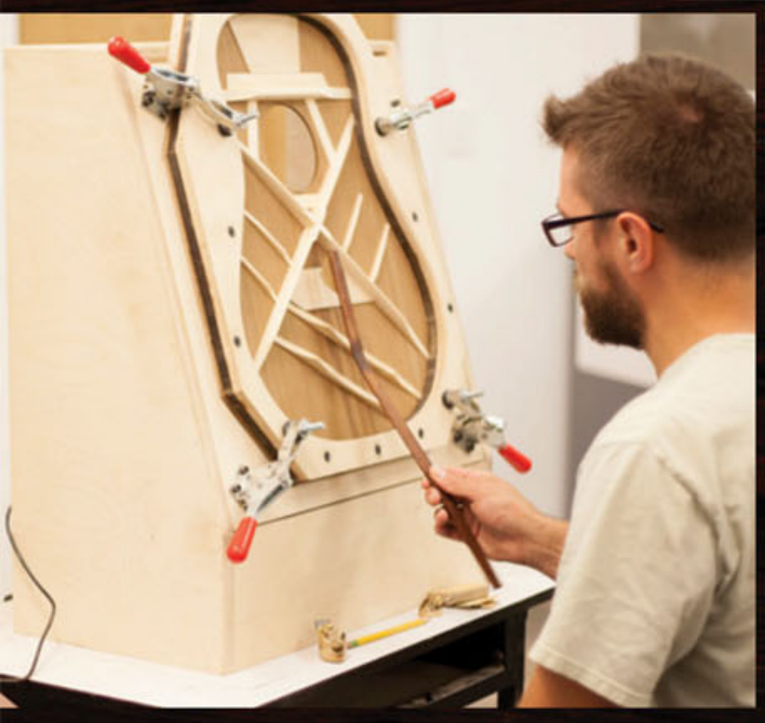

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IBANEZ ASF-180

"Ibanez sometimes produces guitars just for the Japanese market, so I keep an eye on their Japanese website. This model looks like a semihollow body style, but it's actually fully hollow. The overall weight is shockingly light. It sounds great when I play the chunky riff from Ted Nugent's 'Great White Buffalo' on it."

GIBSON ES-330

"This Sixties Gibson is very easy to play due to the skinny nut width. The original tuners were starting to crumble, so I had new ones installed. The P90s are a little hard to use with distortion because of the single-coil hum, but when the amp is set clean it's still a nice punchy tone."

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STELLA H931

"This was the very first guitar that I ever played and owned. Well, not the exact one, which is long gone, but the same model. I played a Stella just like this one during my first two years of 'only upstrokes, only the middle finger, and just the low E-string.' I found it on eBay when I was looking for a way to travel back in time and remember my early days of discovering the guitar. It has a quite a big sound for a little student guitar."

ARNOLD M.J. HENNIG CUSTOM ACOUSTIC

"I found this guitar in a small, high-end acoustic guitar shop in Tokyo. The guitar was made by an American luthier in the Eighties, but somehow it ended up in Japan. I like the bird that is inlaid on the fretboard, and the neck has a very pronounced V shape. It has a nice, balanced acoustic sound but with playability approaching an electric. I used it on my live *Acoustic Samurai* album, where I performed some of my more athletic songs, like 'Scarified,' on acoustic."

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TAYLOR GS MINI MAHOGANY

"I really have fun playing shorter-scale guitars because bending and vibrato are a lot easier. I put Ernie Ball hybrid strings on this guitar to have a plain G string that I can really shake around. I used this guitar to record the intro of my song 'Stone Pushing Uphill Man.' You'd never guess that it's a small guitar. The tone is *big*. I chose the mahogany model just to be different from spruce."

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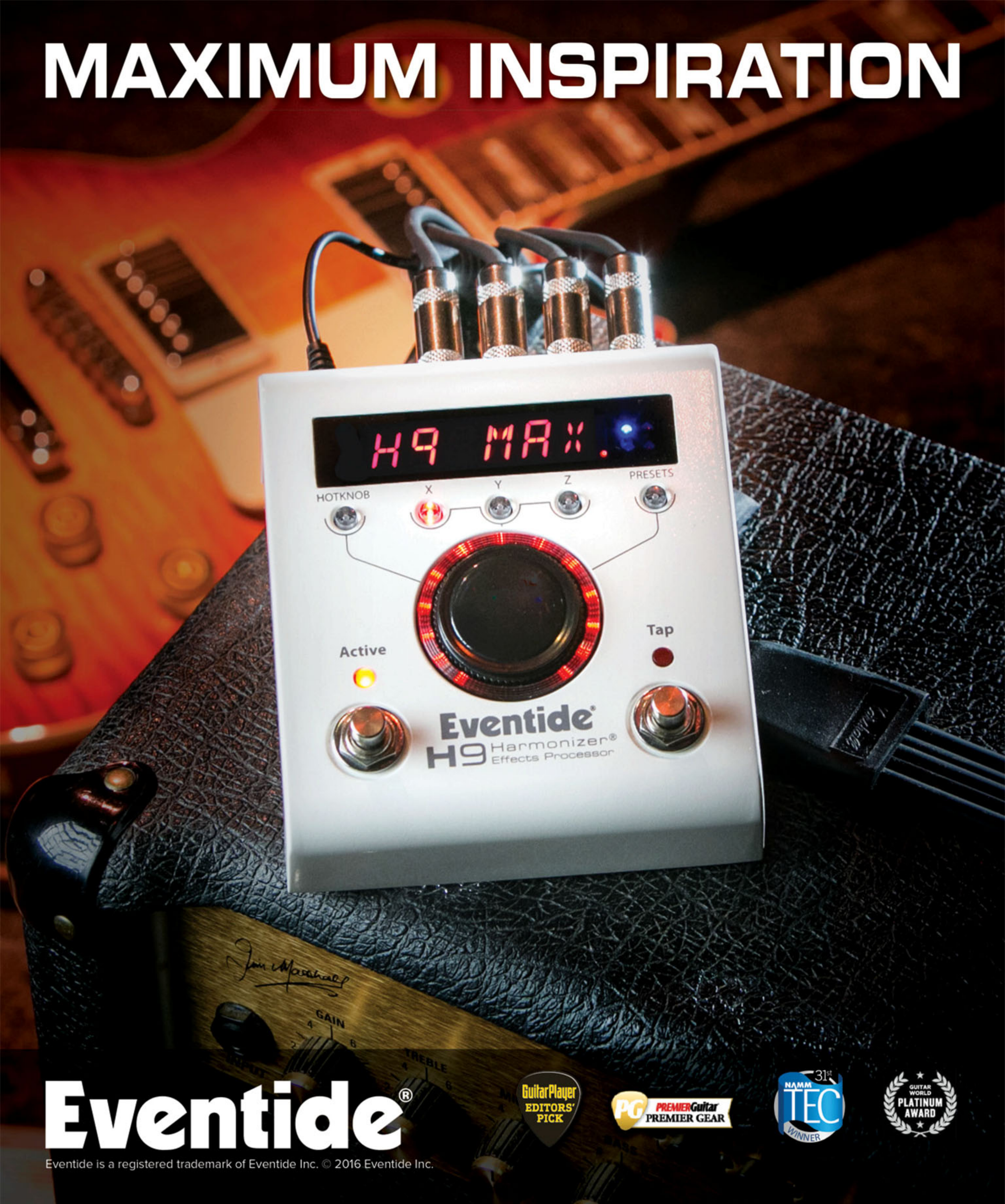

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Guitar Player EDITORS' PICK

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GUITAR WORLD PLATINUM AWARD

VINCENTE CARRILLO FLAMENCO

"During the height of Mr. Big's success in 1993, we happened to be in Spain on my birthday. The record company surprised me with a flamenco guitar, and I spent all night playing it in the marble bathroom of my hotel room because of the reverb. I wrote a pseudo-flamenco song and apologetically titled it 'Flamingo,' due to the fact that my fingerpicking technique is really just good enough to play the intro of 'For Those About to Rock.'"

REVIVAL YEAR

IN 1969, **CREEDENCE CLEARWATER REVIVAL** RELEASED THREE CLASSIC ALBUMS THAT HELPED MAKE THEM ONE OF THE BIGGEST BANDS OF ALL TIME.

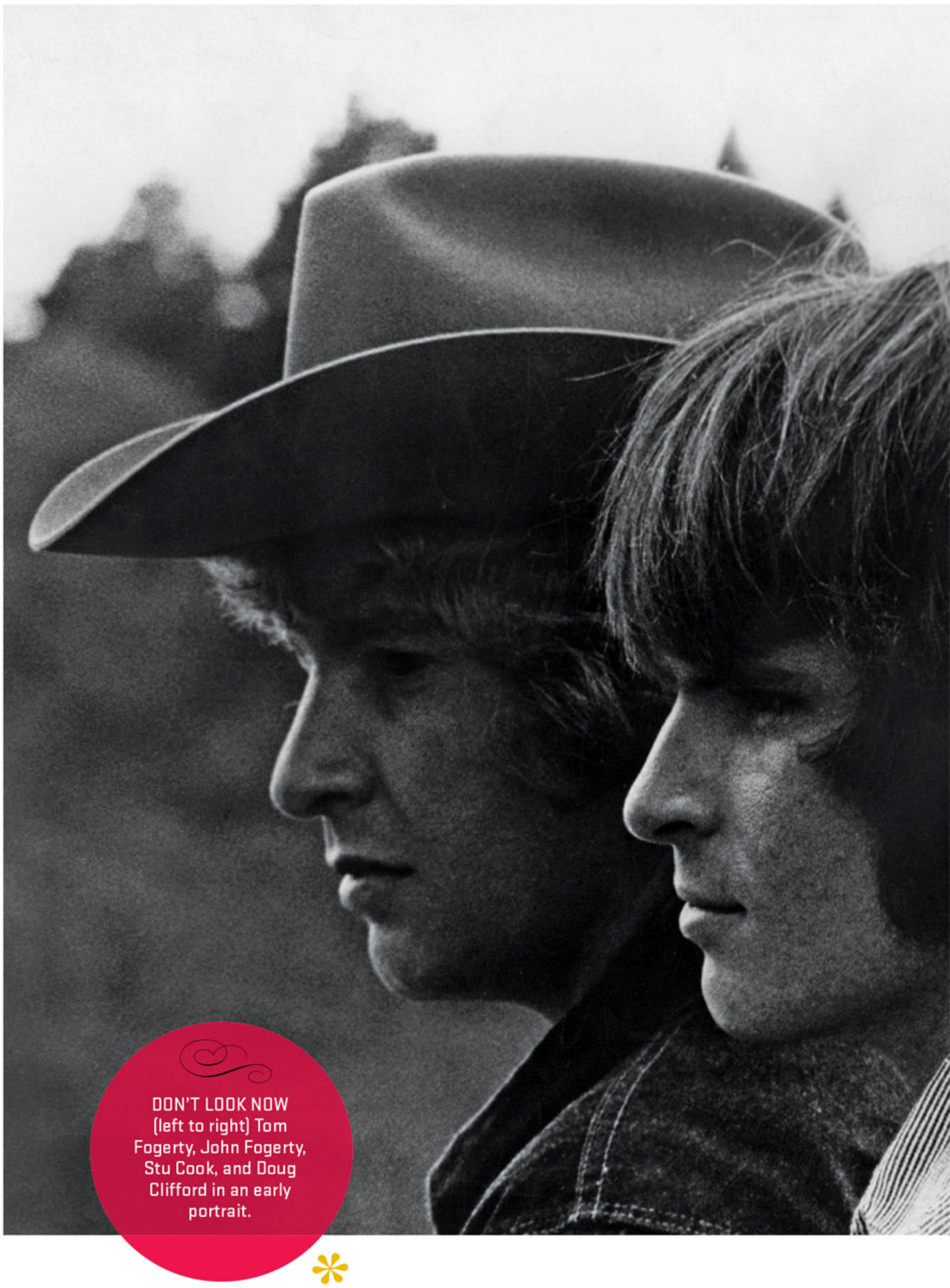
· *By* ALAN DI PERNA ·

THE YEAR 1969 WAS A heavy one by any measure. Nixon's presidency, the Stonewall Riots, John and Yoko's Bed-In for Peace, the Manson Family murders, revelation of the previous year's Mai Lai Massacre, and the violent Days of Rage demonstrations at the trial of the Chicago Eight were among the turbulent events that set an ominous mood as the Sixties drew to a close. Young people took to the streets en masse to protest the Vietnam War. Others, fed up with the system, took to the woods as part of a growing "back to nature" movement.

In popular music, the time for euphoric psychedelia and trippy bliss was drawing to a close. The zeitgeist demanded something grittier, more realistic, yet still uplifting. What was needed was a band to rally the protestors as the cops moved in with tear gas and truncheons, a band to cheer agrarian commune members as they struggled to eke a living from the earth. A rock and roll band—what else?—that could function as the musical voice of the people.

Right on cue, that band emerged from the San Francisco Bay Area—a guitar-driven quartet called Creedence Clearwater Revival. The group made its debuted in 1968 but really hit its stride in 1969. In that single year, Creedence released three landmark albums that would define their legacy: *Bayou Country*, *Green River*, and *Willy and the Poor Boys*. Concord Records' recent vinyl box set reissue of the discs underscores their central role in late-Sixties rock music and enduring importance today.

There was no shortage of iconic rock album releases in 1969, the year that brought us *Abbey Road, Let It Bleed, Tommy, Santana*, and *The Velvet Underground*, among many others. Led Zeppelin released their landmark self-titled debut as well as *Led Zeppelin II* that same year. But CCR was the only band to rack up three *Billboard* Top 10 LPs in a row that year. This stellar achievement is attributable to the hard work and dedication of all four band members as well as the prodigious songwriting gift of their leader, lead guitarist, and chief vocalist, John Fogerty.



DON'T LOOK NOW (left to right) Tom Fogerty, John Fogerty, Stu Cook, and Doug Clifford in an early portrait.

"We could record an entire album in maybe three weeks—basic tracks, overdubs, mixing, and everything," recalls Creedence's longtime engineer Russ Gary. "That's pretty darn good in this world. It shows how together they were as a unit when they came in the studio."

Fogerty knew a lot was at stake when the band entered the RCA Recording Studio in Hollywood in late 1968 to record the album that would become *Bayou Country*. Creedence had enjoyed some success with a single off their self-titled debut album, a cover of Dale Hawkins' 1957 classic "Susie Q" that they turbo-charged with bouts of extended guitar soloing. It was a major feat for a new band on Fantasy Records, a small jazz label out of San Francisco. But now they had to leap boldly through the window of opportunity to conquer the charts.

"We're on the tiniest label in the world," Fogerty recalled. "There's no money behind us, we don't have a manager, there's no publicist.

We basically had none of the usual star-making machinery. So I said to myself, I'm just going to have to do it with the music."

Fortunately, Fogerty brought some first-rate tunes into RCA. While completing a stint in the Army Reserve circa 1967–1968, he wrote two masterful, Faulkner-esque vignettes of southern life: "Proud Mary" and "Born on the Bayou." Replete with images of riverboats, swamps, hound dogs, and hoodoos, the songs evoked a mythic America that resonated deeply at the time. Bob Dylan named "Proud Mary" his favorite song that year. Fogerty said that the songs' soon-to-be-classic C-to-A chord intro was inspired by the opening of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, which is based on the same interval. In the guitar solo, he admitted he was emulating one of his ax heroes, Steve Cropper.

WThe guitar sound was a major factor in the success of these songs and others from *Bayou Country*. By this point, Fogerty, his brother and rhythm guitarist Tom, bassist Stu Cook, and drummer Doug Clifford had been playing together for nearly a decade, having started as a high school rock band. Their sound was dialed in. John Fogerty played a Gibson ES-175 on "Proud Mary" but used a 3/4-scale Rickenbacker 325, retrofitted with a Bigsby tailpiece, on other tracks. Tom Fogerty's principal guitar was a Rickenbacker 360. Both plugged their guitars into solid-state Kustom amps.

While *Bayou Country* became a major triumph for the band, John Fogerty still wasn't completely satisfied with the sound they achieved on the disc. When he and his bandmates learned that L.A. recording maven Wally Heider had opened a state-of-the-art three-studio recording facility in San Francisco, where the band members all lived, they decided to record their next album, *Green River,* there. This was also the first of many recordings CCR made with Russ Gary, who was then the house engineer at Heider's San Francisco studio.

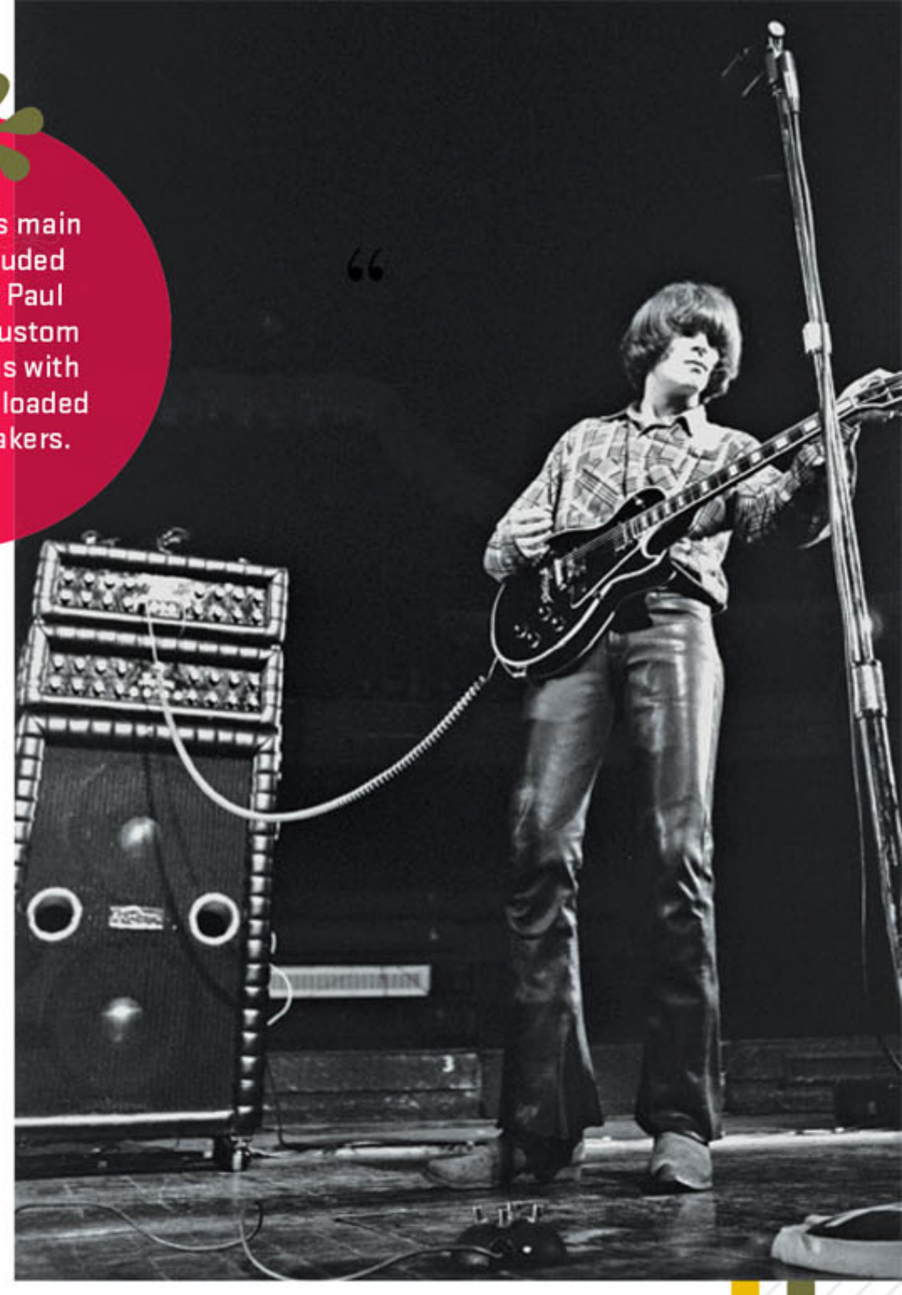
Gary was impressed by how together CCR were when they first showed up at Heider's Studio C. Unlike a lot of bands at the time, they were drug-free and strictly business when it came to recording. "They were the most prepared, well-rehearsed band I ever recorded," he says.

Gary's approach to capturing the guitar sound was simple. He close-miked John and Tom Fogerty's amps with Shure SM56s, adding a Neumann U87 room mic for a little ambience. And while Kustom amps don't enjoy the greatest reputation, Gary says that he and the band had no trouble getting great tones from them.

"Most people don't know that John removed the Kustom loudspeakers in those amp and inserted JBLs, which introduced an identifiable sound," Gary says. "A lot of people couldn't get those Kustoms to work really well for them, but that little trick of installing JBLs made a big difference. Also, while they used Kustoms on several of the songs, they made equal use of Fender Vibrolux Reverb amps. Those Vibroluxes had been tweaked a little bit by the band's guitar tech. But the two amps are the guitar tone of the album for the most part."

Fogerty supplemented his Rickenbacker 325s with a Gibson Les Paul Custom, which is heard on one of *Green River* 's standout tracks, Fogerty's politically engaged "Bad Moon Rising." He'd also had one of his 325s retrofitted with a humbucking pickup for a more Gibson-style sound. Tom moved from his Rickenbacker 360 to a Guild Starfire IV electric archtop, and Stu Cook traded his Rickenbacker bass for a Fender Precision Bass.

Once basic tracks for *Green River* were completed, Gary says, "I was surprised that only John Fogerty returned to do overdubs. I never spoke to the other band members again until the next project we started." One example is the



John Fogerty's main stage rig included a Gibson Les Paul Custom and Kustom K200A-4 heads with a 2x15 cabinet loaded with JBL speakers.

double-tracked Gibson J-200 acoustic guitar that John added to "Green River," something he would do on other Creedence tracks such as "Cotton Fields" from *Willy and the Poor Boys*.

"A lot of John's overdubbing sessions," Gary adds, "were percussion—cowbell, shakers, conga drums—subtle piano things that most people don't notice, and some acoustic guitars. All that stuff was mixed down to move the songs along but keep the feel of a four-piece band."

And while other band members sang vocal harmonies when CCR played live, John Fogerty was overdubbing all the vocal harmonies by himself at this stage in the band's career. "One little trick we always did with his harmonies was to slow the tape machine down while he was recording it," Gary says. "Then when it played back it always had that little extra, crisp feeling. Some people even said, 'Hey, you've got girls singing in there,' but it wasn't."

Fogerty's tight control over the music would become a point of contention between him and his bandmates, especially his elder brother Tom, who initially was the band's lead singer and frontman back in high school when they were known as Tommy and the Blue Velvets. Differences of opinion eventually led to Tom's departure from the band, but in 1969, as Russ Gary puts it, "Everybody in the band respected John's leadership," although tensions certainly seethed beneath the surface.

Riding high on the success of *Green River*, Creedence Clearwater reconvened with Gary in late 1969 to record their conceptual masterwork, *Willy and the Poor Boys*. Through the album's songs, CCR assumed the fictitious persona of the titular, impoverished street band. Their tale is told by the album's opening track, the hit single "Down on the Corner." The disc also includes some of Fogerty's most impassioned and anthemic political songs, including "Fortunate Son," "Don't Look Now," and "Effigy," which bristled with opposition to the Vietnam War and empathy with working people.

"I see things through lower-class eyes," Fogerty told *Time* magazine.

While touring in the interval between *Green River* and *Willy*, Fogerty's Les Paul Custom suffered a cracked neck. When he took it in for repair, he had it remade as a 3/4-scale instrument. This is the guitar heard on the band's recording of the Lead Belly song "The Midnight Special" for *Willy and the Poor Boys*. Fogerty's Kustom amp provided the track's deep, swampy tremolo. It is one of two Lead Belly covers included on the album, the other being "Cotton Fields."

Released in November 1969, *Willy and the Poor Boys* beautifully encapsulates CCR's deep roots in folk, blues, country, and early rock and roll. The group would go on to record three more albums—two without Tom Fogerty—before disbanding in 1972. But their monumental 1969 trifecta continues to loom large in the annals of pop music history. John Fogerty had achieved his goal of keeping his band at the top of the charts and in the hearts of fans throughout one of the most pivotal and eventful years in all of rock music.

Over the next four decades, Creedence Clearwater Revival songs from their 1969 albums have remained in the public consciousness, thanks to their continuous presence on radio and usage in films. "Bad Moon Rising" has been heard in everything from *An American Werewolf in London* and *The Big Chill* to *Dexter* and *Vinyl*, while "Fortunate Son" seems to show up in every documentary and film scene depicting the Vietnam War, most notably *Forrest Gump*. The recent RIAA diamond certification (10 million albums sold) of *Chronicle: Volume 1*, which contains many of Creedence's biggest hits from their 1969 albums, stands as testimony to the band's continued popularity and relevance today. GA

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Spacing Out

WHAT WAS GRETSCH THINKING WITH ITS NON-INTONATING SPACE CONTROL BRIDGE?

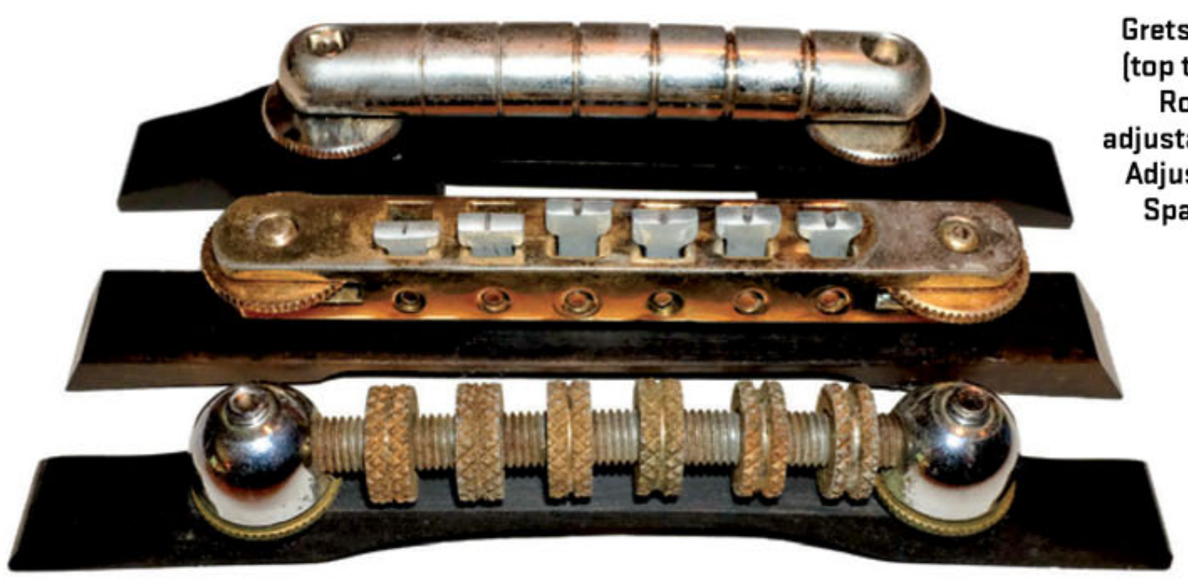
{ *BY FLIP SCIPIO* }

WHOEVER THOUGHT STRING spacing was more important than intonation? Gretsch apparently thought so when it introduced the Space Control bridge in the late Fifties. Even though the company had the superior, fully adjustable Melita Synchro-Sonic bridge at its disposal, Gretsch thought it wise to outfit its guitars with a bridge that didn't leave room for actual intonation adjustments.

This curious hardware decision, so typical of the colorful Gretsch company, has always puzzled anybody familiar with the idea of playing in tune. One function of the bridge is to transfer the strings' vibrations to the guitar top, and so its construction and placement—and the actual connection between the bridge and the top—are of great influence to how the guitar sounds and notes sustain.

Early Gretsch archtop guitars had traditional wooden bridges consisting of a rosewood or ebony foot with two threaded posts and adjustment wheels, and a bridge top that usually had a vibrating edge compensated for a set of strings with a wound third string. When Gretsch introduced its 6120 model in 1954, the guitar came with either a Bigsby-made cast-aluminum archtop bridge or a solid round plated-brass bar machined with six grooves for the strings.

Both of these bridges sound very good, due to their dense material and minimum amount of moving parts, all of which allows excellent transfer of string vibrations to the top and provides a simple, unimpeded ramp for the strings. One of the problems that plague the Space Control bridge is that the strings (particularly wound strings) tend to get stuck in the grooves of its brass saddle wheels, which can cause tuning problems. Moreover, the wheels are mounted on a simple piece of threaded rod that's roughly bent to supposedly match the radius of the fingerboard. The Space Control's main sales feature was "individual side-to-side adjustment of the strings," but unfortunately this pales next to the inconvenience of having no way to adjust each string's intonation point.



Gretsch bridges (top to bottom): Rocking Bar, adjustable (a.k.a. Adjusto-matic), Space Control

An earlier introduction to the flock than the Space Control bridge, the Melita Bridge did allow easy intonation adjustment for each string, but as far as I'm concerned it didn't sound as good as the solid-bar bridge. The Melita's small adjustable bridge base was undoubtedly designed to alleviate the wearisome task of fitting the bridge foot to the often unevenly arched top, but it's relatively small contact surface compounded the energy loss caused by the bridge's many moving parts, which often rattled loose and disappeared into the fifth dimension of the stage floor. Melita bridges with all their original parts intact are indeed quite rare.

My pet Gretsch bridge is actually the solid bar, also known as the Rocking Bar bridge, so named after its ability to pivot on its bottom edge, which helps to keep the guitar in tune when using a Bigbsy tailpiece. For Gretsch aficionados who prefer medium-gauge half-round strings with a wound third string, this type of bridge is akin to the Louisville Slugger. If you prefer to wear Hermès instead of something off the rack, try a custom-made Tru-Arc bridge, available in a choice of different radii and string spacings, and made of brass, copper, aluminum, or steel. I recently made a pair of Gretsch-flavored guitars with these straight-bar copper bridges that were quite well received.

However, if you are wont to play open strings while also fretting on the upper end of the fingerboard, you might prefer a Tune-o-matic-style Adjusto-matic bridge top and a traditional wooden bridge foot on your instrument. The saddles on the Nashville-style Tune-o-matic bridge have less play between parts, which helps transfer more string energy to the top. Make sure the string slots in the saddles conform to the string gauges you're using to avoid "space controlitis," a sad affliction that seriously affects your instinctive reach for the Bigsby handle. GA

New York guitar maker Flip Scipio runs the hamster wheel chasing the perfect setup and recommends William Bell's new album, This Is Where I Live.

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Spark of Imagination

THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF SPARKLING WINES BEYOND CHAMPAGNE.

{ *BY CHRIS GILL, CWAS* }

THERE REALLY IS no question that France's Champagne region produces the finest sparkling wines in the world. Devoted Champagne enthusiasts have little incentive for looking beyond the region, particularly since prices for most Champagne wines have not experienced the same inflationary surges as Bordeaux and Burgundy and, with the exception of the most luxurious cuvees, prices for even the best Tête de Cuvée vintage Champagnes are relatively modest compared to a first-growth Bordeaux or Grand Cru Burgundy. Beyond the popular and esteemed wines produced by the large Champagne houses, there are nearly 5,000 estates that produce "grower" Champagne, where the wine is produced exclusively from grapes grown in their own vineyards instead of sourced from a variety of vineyards as is the practice of the large Champagne houses. One could spend a lifetime exploring grower Champagne alone.

However, anyone who limits their consumption of sparkling wine exclusively to Champagne is missing out on the wonderful variety of fascinating sparkling wines that come from other regions in France and beyond. While the production of Champagne is limited mainly to Pinot Noir, Meunier, and Chardonnay grapes, with other varietals like Arbane, Pinot Blanc, Pinot Gris, and Petit Meslier accounting for less than 0.3 percent of the grapes used to produce Champagne, sparkling wine produced elsewhere is not as narrowly defined. Varietals used to produce sparkling wines elsewhere can include Chenin Blanc, Pinot Blanc, Pinot Gris, Cabernet Franc, Sauvignon Blanc, Riesling, Grüner Veltliner, Auxerrois, Mauzac, Glera, Macabeo, Parellada, Xarello, and many others.

Generally, three different methods are used to produce sparkling wine: *Méthode Champenoise* (or *Méthode Traditionelle* as it's called in regions of France outside of Champagne as well as by European wine producers complying with EU regulations), *Méthode Ancestral*, and *Charmat*. Artificial processes that inject CO2 into wine are used for cheap, simplistic sparkling wines that are labeled as "aerated sparkling wine" in the EU and are better avoided. Most quality sparkling wines are produced using *Méthode Traditionelle*, although many Italian sparkling wines like Prosecco employ the *Charmat* method.

Crémant wines are some of the most enjoyable sparkling wines produced outside of Champagne. Eight different regions in France produce Crémant, but my favorites (in descending order) come from Alsace, the Loire Valley, Burgundy (*Bourgogne*), and Languedoc-Roussillon (Crémant de Limoux). The Loire Valley also produces excellent sparkling Vouvray wines made from Chenin Blanc grapes that are worth seeking out. Crémant wines are generally inexpensive and are made to be consumed young while the fruit is still vibrant and the nose retains delicate, floral aromas. Because Crémant wines are not as complex and nuanced as fine aged vintage Champagne, they also go well with bold-flavored foods such as curry and tagine.

Cava wines from Spain have emerged as impressive competition for Champagne in recent times. One can easily spend upwards of $100 on a bottle of aged vintage Cava that will continue to develop impressively for years to come, such as 2001 Gramona Gran Reserva Brut, but many Cava wines priced below $30 offer excellent quality-to-price ratios. While the best Cava wines are nearly indistinguishable from fine Champagne, Cava is made mostly from blends of indigenous grapes that include Macabeo, Parellada, and Xarello, although Chardonnay is increasingly making its way into the mix as well. The flavors of Cava can range from vibrant citrus and tropical fruits to the distinctive toasty, biscuit-like quality of aged Champagne.

Recently, the quality of Italian Prosecco has improved immensely, although one still needs to be wary of overly sweet *frizzante* examples that are little more than alcohol-spiked soda pop. Prosecco is usually produced using the *Charmat* method in stainless steel tanks, so the fruit flavors are more pronounced and fresh. A general rule of thumb when shopping for Prosecco is to look for wines labelled Brut and bearing a DOCG designation (only Prosecco wines from the Conegliano-Valdobbiadene and Asolo regions have DOCG labels). Extra-dry and dry Proseccos have more residual sugar and are sweeter. Prosecco is made from Glera grapes.

Sekt wines from Germany and Austria, Espumante wines from Portugal, and an increasing variety of stunning sparkling wines from the United States offer sparkling wine enthusiasts plenty of territory worthy of exploration. Champagne may reign as the king of sparkling wines for years to come, but the alternatives are getting better with each passing vintage. GA

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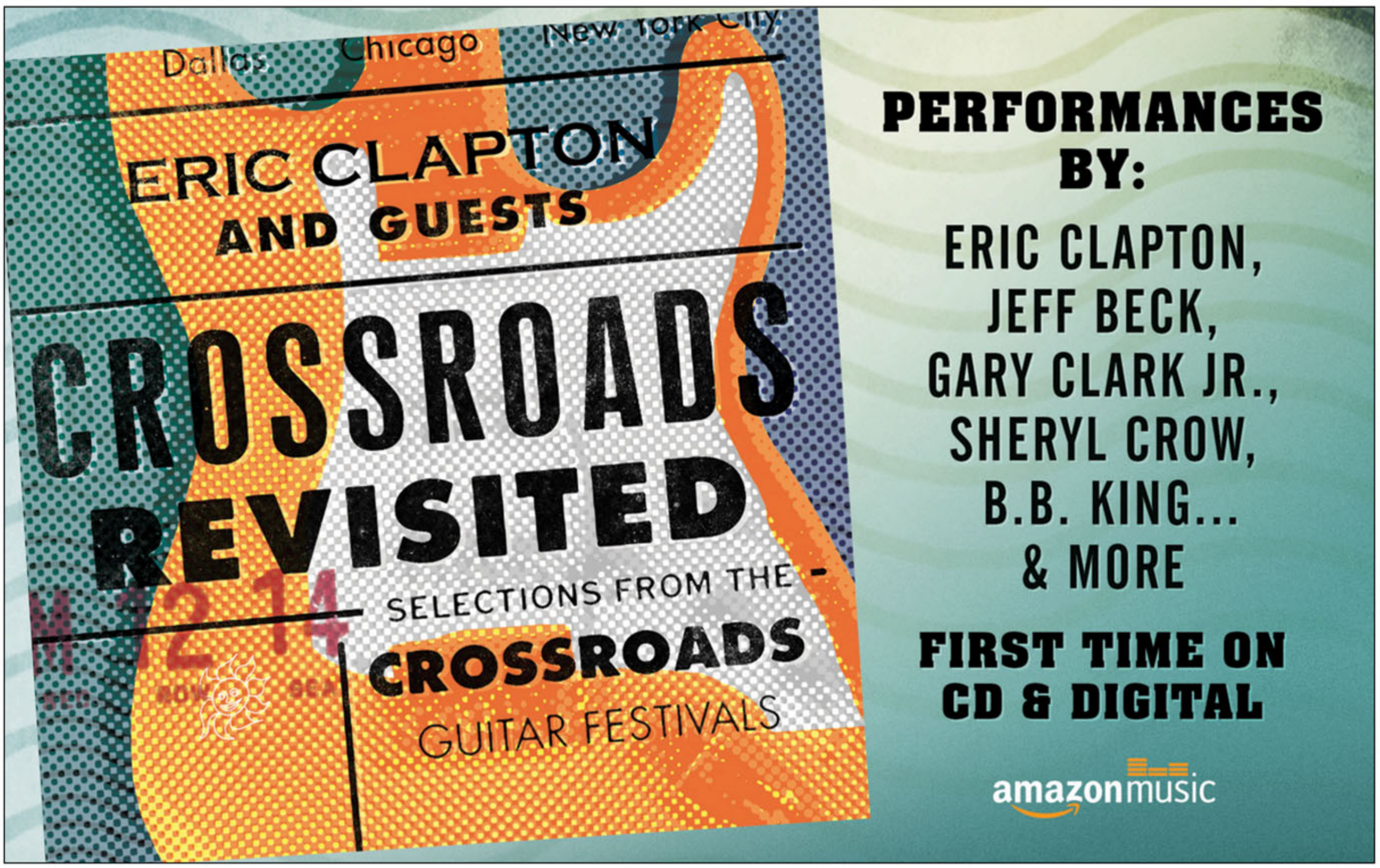
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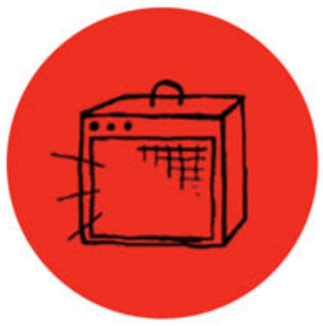

Crocodile Rock

SELMER AMPS SOUND AS COOL AS THEY LOOK

When it comes to vintage British guitar amps, several names immediately come to mind, including Marshall, Vox, Hiwatt, and Orange. But Britain produced an astounding variety of amps during the Fifties, Sixties, and Seventies, with brands that include Laney, Watkins (WEM), Domino, Park, Sound City, Bird, Selmer, and many others. For this issue's column I'm going to focus on Selmer.

Selmer was founded in France in 1885 as a maker of reeds for wind instruments, and over time it became the world's premier saxophone manufacturer. Selmer also made the distinctive acoustic guitars favored by Django Reinhardt. But the fun stuff—for us amp freaks, anyway—began when Ben Davis, a self-taught sax player, started Selmer distribution in the U.K. in 1928. By the beginning of World War II, Selmer had expanded to become the biggest musical instrument company in Britain.

When it comes to amp manufacturing, Selmer U.K. was there from the very beginning, offering its first amps in 1935. Over time, it offered everything from five-watt practice amps to 50-watt 2x12 combos and six-channel 100-watt P.A.s. The amps' cosmetic designs were excellent, but in my opinion the appearance changed too often in the heyday between 1957 and the early Seventies. Selmer continued to make tube amps until the late Seventies (along with solid-state amps), but I have a feeling they didn't sell too many from the mid Seventies onward. The "Blood and Custard" (red-and-cream) and croc skin–covered amps are my favorites, but other cool examples include models with a blue/gray-and-black color scheme and octagon grille cloth, the latter likely inspired by the Vox diamond grille, which was very popular at the time.

Many famous U.K. guitarists and bands, including the Beatles, used Selmer amps when they started out. Other famous users include the Shadows, Procol Harum, and the Animals (allegedly Hilton Valentine used a Selmer amp to record his guitar part for "House of the Rising Sun"). However, most artists eventually switched to Vox and Marshall, partly because these companies were much more aggressive with the artist outreach and also because Marshall and Vox products seemed more in tune with the music of the day.

Notable Selmer amps I have encountered include the Little Giant, Stadium, Twin Selectortone, Constellation 20, Zodiac Twin 30, Zodiac Twin 50, Bassmaster, and Treble and Bass 50, all of which are discussed in detail below.

Selmer's "budget" Futurama series also offered some good amps, particularly if you like low-power overdrive (don't we all!). I've found that Selmer combos can be a little difficult to work on for a number of reasons. Should you find one and be uncertain of its condition, or want to keep it running strong for years to come, make sure you have access to a competent tech.

Little Giant: This was Selmer's compact answer to the Fender Champ and Gibson Skylark, featuring one 12AX7, one EL84, and an EZ80 tube rectifier. Great design, simple circuit, small speaker, and big tone. Keith Richards' first amp was a Little Giant, and Rory Gallagher was a fan of its fierce tone.

Stadium: A compact combo with a great-sounding 12-inch Goodmans Audiom 60 speaker and a tube complement of EL84s, one 12AX7, one 12AU7, and several EF86s.

Twin Selectortone: This is an early version of what later became the coveted Zodiac Twin 30 but with KT88s (instead of EL34s) and reverb. It's not quite the Zodiac but still a very good amp.

Constellation 20: This very compact 2x12 combo is sometimes fitted with silver Alnico Celestions, the same wonderful speakers used in the Vox AC30 but in silver and without magnet covers. This sleeper Selmer amp is very hard to find in the U.S. Pass if you find one with lightweight Fane speakers.

Zodiac Twin 30: Used on many hit recordings, the Zodiac Twin 30 is one of the best-sounding combos ever as well as one of the best looking, with its croc skin covering. The circuit uses cathode-biased EL34s to provide a 30-watt output. Twin 30 amps with silver Alnico Celestions have an amazing clean sound, while those with Goodmans are better for overdrive.

Zodiac Twin 50: Although the Zodiac Twin 50 does not provide quite the same feel and tone as the Zodiac Twin 30, due to its fixed-biased EL34s, it's still a great amp.

Bassmaster: This two-channel, 30-watt head is driven by EL34s and features volume, treble, and bass controls on each channel. This Bassmaster came out in 1962, while the blonde Fender Bassman came out in 1961. Was this Selmer's answer to the Bassman?

Treble and Bass 50: The upgraded 50-watt version of the Bassmaster was designed for both guitar and bass. I've seen old Marshalls with replaced output transformers taken from these Selmer amps. The telltale sign is that they have only two output taps for 7.5 and 15 ohms (or let's round that to eight and 16). GA

Mitch Colby helped develop many Marshall and Vox amp designs and is the founder of Colby Amplification.

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Club Dread

Bedell Rio Dreadnought

BY CHRIS GILL
PHOTOGRAPHY BY MASSIMO GAMMACURTA

A BIG PART of Brazilian rosewood's allure is that it has developed the cachet of "forbidden fruit" over the years. Supplies of this celebrated tonewood have become increasingly scarce since *Dalbergia nigra* was added to the CITES treaty in 1992, which banned exportation of any Brazilian rosewood unless it was harvested and exported prior to 1992 or harvested from trees felled by lightning or other "natural causes." The addition of Brazilian rosewood to the flora and fauna restricted by the expanded Lacey Act in 2008 also made it difficult to transport Brazilian rosewood across international borders in any form—from raw wood to a finished vintage guitar—unless it was accompanied by detailed paperwork that proved its provenance and legality.

Despite the hassles of possessing a guitar made of Brazilian rosewood, many acoustic connoisseurs won't accept any other tonewood substitute, no matter how gorgeous many of the alternatives sound. The reason is, although the differences may be very subtle, nothing else sounds exactly like Brazilian rosewood. The density, hardness, stiffness, and comparatively light weight of the wood is an ideal combination when one is seeking brilliant, lively, responsive tone with rich resonance, assertive volume projection, and complex harmonic depth.

Bedell's new Rio Series flattop acoustic guitars celebrate the most desirable characteristics of this glorious tonewood. Featuring backs and sides constructed from the one-of-a-kind Esperanza Brazilian rosewood tree, which grew sometime between the 16th and 18th centuries until being harvested in the late Fifties, Bedell's Rio Series consists of parlor, orchestra, and dreadnought models.

The Rio Dreadnought that Bedell sent us to review is a fine example of just how powerful and versatile a dreadnought can be. In addition to its exquisite Brazilian rosewood back and sides, the guitar features an extra-stiff top made from salvaged old-growth Sitka spruce with bear claw figuring and a one-piece Honduran mahogany neck. Old-world construction techniques are used throughout, including hand carving the Sitka spruce tone bars, individually tuning each top, and fitting the neck to the body with a compound taper dovetail joint.

Several cosmetic characteristics give the Rio Dreadnought its own distinctive look while retaining the timeless appeal of the classic dreadnought design. The top has a vibrant sunburst finish that combines brilliant reds and yellows with the warm glow of amber, rust, and chocolate brown in layers that seamlessly transition from one hue to the next. The fingerboard and headstock overlay have a distinctive "plume" inlay pattern rendered in brass to complement the warm hues of the sunburst finish and Brazilian rosewood back and sides. The overall appearance is fancy yet tastefully understated.

Bedell says that because the Esperanza Brazilian rosewood is unusually dense and strong, they were able to construct an exceptionally thin back to enhance responsiveness. As a result, the guitar is surprisingly light compared to most other dreadnoughts. In addition to making the guitar very comfortable to play, the light weight makes the instrument impressively sensitive to vibrations. One can feel the top move when talking in a normal speaking voice, and when chords are vigorously strummed the entire body feels like it is alive.

Like a good dreadnought, the Rio Dreadnought produces powerful bass, yet the lower frequencies never overwhelm the midrange and treble. The mids are satisfyingly full-bodied, and the treble notes cut assertively when plucked with a flatpick without sounding thin or shrill. The overall tone is like the acoustic flattop guitar equivalent of a Steinway grand piano, with more than ample power as well as the ability to speak softly while still projecting nuances to the back of the room.

But the most impressive feature of the Bedell Rio Dreadnought is its surprisingly down-to-earth price. The model certainly isn't cheap, but considering that the entire guitar costs about the same or less than what many of Bedell's competitors charge just for the option of Brazilian rosewood back and sides, it offers Brazilian rosewood enthusiasts an incredibly tantalizing deal. GA

LIST PRICE: $6,990
Bedell Guitars, bedellguitars.com

RIO HEAT Angela Christensen, Bedell's wood management and product design manager, talks shop.

What is the inspiration for the distinctive hue of the sunburst finish?
The unique Rio sunburst was inspired by the vibrancy of life in Rio! Red, orange, gold, blue, purple, green—the opulence that exudes the liveliness Rio represents. We wanted to tastefully combine these colors in the overall design of the new Bedell Rio Series. The colors and pattern achieved in the Rio sunburst are seductive, exquisite, truly exclusive, and rare.

How did Bedell acquire the Esperanza Brazilian rosewood?
Bedell got this wood from Madinter in Spain [*a wood supplier that specializes in legal, sustainable, and responsibly harvested tonewoods exclusively for the musical instrument industry*]. It is fully documented and legal to travel the world.

Why was brass used for the fingerboard and headstock overlay inlays instead of shell or pearl?
The Rio Series needed to be exotic, striking, sensually appealing, and luscious to the eye and ear. We have used brass as an inlay material before, and we felt it was a natural choice in place of the traditional pearl or shell used in most inlays. The rich color and shine of the brass loaned itself well to the plume pattern of the inlay. It was just the right amount of adornment to complement the overall design.

Bedell

Orange Crush

2016 McLaren 570S Coupé

BY MIKE DALY

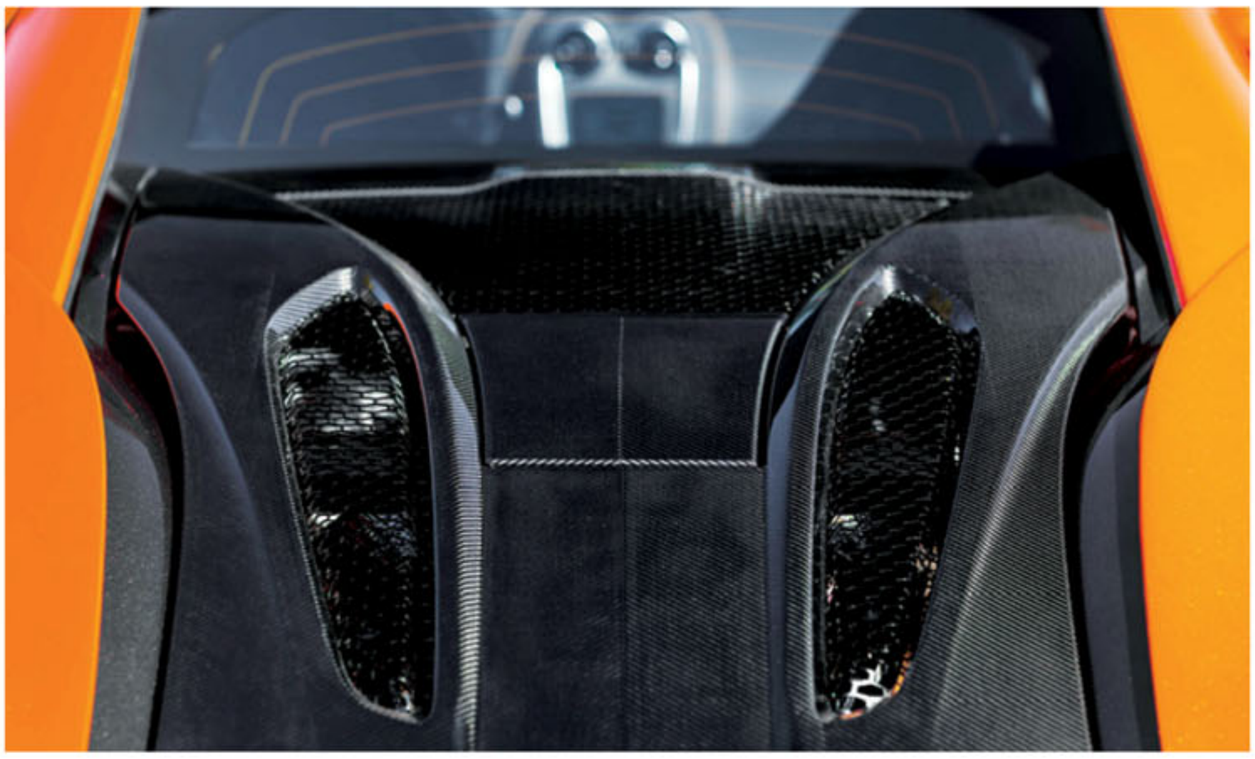
DRIVING THE NEW McLaren 570S is an otherworldly experience from the outset, even before the car is taken out of park. The drill begins by sliding a hand under the carbon fiber-composite winglets that trace the car's window sills, floating components that are designed to channel air into huge rear radiators. A slight tug of the underlying release button triggers a massive dihedral door to vertically swing up with a spaceship-like whoosh, revealing a leather-and-Alcantara-swathed cockpit awash with switches, buttons, and stalks, all subtly decked out in carbon fiber.

To enter the vehicle, the driver stoops on the left leg while swinging the right over a large side sill that's actually the edge of the McLaren's safety tub, the foundational prerequisite of any modern racecar. Despite being narrower and 80mm lower than the corresponding beam in McLaren's other models, the 570S's cell still poses a bit of a navigational challenge for the average non-contortionist.

Once finally settled into the multi-adjustable driver's seat, the pilot depresses the start button and is greeted by McLaren's signature twin-turbocharged V-8. The throaty, high-revving 3.8-liter motor, which was codeveloped with engineering concern Ricardo, sits just behind the driver, barely covered by a heat-releasing grate. Without even leaving the curb, the 570S has provided an experience like few others, and one that most people will attain only in a dream.

Historically known as a racing company, McLaren has released just a handful of alphanumerically named models over the past few years, so a brief recap may be in order. For several decades, McLaren specialized in Formula 1 titles care of racing's best drivers (Alain Prost, Ayrton Senna, and Lewis Hamilton, among others). After building an instant Le Mans winner and one of the most legendary supercars of all time with the 1995 McLaren F1, the British company finally decided to launch a dedicated road car division for extended production of a full model line that began in 2011 with the MP4-12C.

Just four years later, that car was replaced in the lineup by the 570S, which more logically completes the manufacturer's newly conceived three-tier range. Unbelievably, McLaren considers the $184,000 570S to be an introductory-level model, a mere sports car compared to the supercars that comprise its upper two levels: the 650



series and the sold-out top-of-the-line, multimillion-dollar P1 hypercar. But to many people's thinking, a sports car is a Mazda Miata, a Lotus Elise, or even a Porsche 911. This is an entirely different beast, quite literally.

Positioned to be a less expensive, easier-to-use, and more forgiving version of the other McLarens, the 570S is nevertheless a pure performer whose F1 roots are rarely far from view. It is the first McLaren to feature superformed aluminum coachwork (other models have been shelled in carbon-fiber composites), which designer Rob Melville shaped to feature wind-channeling mirrors and flying buttresses, intakes, and diffusers, along with a slippery one-piece underside. It's the kind of magnetic bodyshell that attracts gawking iPhone videographers like moths to a spotlight as one traverses otherwise plebeian stretches of highway.

The M838TE engine, a further development of the proprietary V-8 in all the new McLarens, develops 562 horsepower at 7,400 rpm (the metric equivalent of 570 hp is the basis of the model's name). Its 443 pound-feet torque peak arrives at 5,000 rpm, about two-thirds of the way to an occasional 8,100 rpm redline (the digital redline actually changes depending on which drive mode is selected and whether the vehicle is moving or not).

The 570S rockets to 60 mph in a frightening 3.1 seconds, but thanks to the über-dialed-in suspension, the huge front and rear carbon ceramic brake rotors (15.5 and 15 inches, respectively), and the purpose-engineered Pirelli P Zero Corsa tires, it never skips a beat. Squirrelly is simply not in this car's vocabulary. For those that dare, top speed is officially 204 mph, which puts the 570S in an exclusive club of supercars capable of the double-century mark.

I did my best to explore the limits of the 570S as I whipped through the slalom curves of Mulholland Drive at 50 mph or more time and again, but changes in asphalt and surface imperfections did little to dislodge the car during breakneck hairpin turns. With individual adaptive dampers performing in concert with front and rear anti-roll bars, all tuned around an F1-style double wishbone, the 570S seems to cushion the road from every angle. The electronic stability control and suspension are arguably the best in the business, and a separate button for the ESC system can entirely disable traction control for track outings or less-discrete displays on local asphalt. A reduced mode of traction intervention called Dynamic is enough to transmit every bump in the road, instantly informing the driver of minute changes. Add in electro-hydraulic steering that delivers razor-sharp precision and the car starts taking on video-game like properties. So perpetual were the grins on my face that I could have spent hours more in the 570S were it not for an emptying gas tank and concerned voicemails from my family.

Despite the incessant engine noise and the constant downshifting of automatic mode, the 570S is actually positioned as McLaren's daily driver. Admittedly, once ingress has been achieved, cabin comfort is exceptional, with the stitched leather seats providing grand-touring comfort. Our test car was optioned to the nines, with heated eight-way electronically adjustable seats, cruise control, back-up camera, and a ride-raise function that lifts the front end 40mm at speeds less than 37 mph (effective for avoiding direct contact with steep driveways and obnoxious speed bumps, the supercar's bane). It also featured a 14-channel, 12-speaker, 1,280-watt Bowers & Wilkins sound system with dash-top teardrop tweeters that took my iPod to exciting new levels.

Potential buyers deciding that the 570S is too race ready can take heart that a more relaxed GT version promises to be released shortly. Regardless of body style or trim level, though, it's pretty obvious that the new McLarens are convincingly vying for supremacy of the U.S. supercar market. They have the looks, engineering, performance, and racing pedigree to match anything on today's market, and there's little doubt the folks at Maranello, Stuttgart, and Ingersolt have taken notice. GA

MSRP: Base, $184,900; as tested, $218,030

McLaren, cars.mclaren.com

Cask Strength

Fender Custom Shop "80 Proof" Blues Junior Limited Edition

BY PAUL RIARIO
PHOTOGRAPHY BY MASSIMO GAMMACURTA

BUILDING A CUSTOM amplifier is a lot like crafting great whiskey: It takes a careful blend of ingredients and a lot of time to produce a perfectly pleasurable result. Just as fine barrel-aged whiskies present a seamless mix of strong and subtle flavors, a well-made amplifier can display an abundance of refined complexities that resolve into a distinctive tone.

Apparently, a master builder in the Fender Custom Shop figured out that if the spirit ages gracefully in an oak cask, a similar amp enclosure might impart some vintage mojo to guitar tone. The result is the Fender Custom Shop "80 Proof" Blues Junior Limited Edition, a handcrafted amplifier encased in reclaimed bourbon barrels. While you savor the amp's distinctive tones, you can revel in the fact that no two are exactly alike due to the uniqueness of each oak cabinet enclosure, which features branded markings and wood stain from the barrels' various distilleries.

The amp is a real showpiece of craftsmanship, with a finger-jointed aged oak-barrel cabinet, a Fender logo seared into the wood, brass knobs and control panel, rusted brass side panels, and a stitched vintage leather handle. The combo is similar to Fender's Hot Rod Series Blues Junior, with 15 watts of power, a solid-state rectifier, dual EL84 power tubes, and three 12AX7 preamp tubes. However, the "80 Proof" secret sauce is swapping in a top-shelf 12–inch Jensen P12Q speaker that adds noticeable warmth and punch. The amp features controls for volume, treble, bass, middle, master, and reverb, and includes a luscious-sounding spring reverb and a fat boost switch that adds crunchy heft and searing heat to the midrange. The "80 Proof" Blues Junior will be limited to just 100 units worldwide, which means it not only looks and sounds cool—it's also highly collectible.

I've used plenty of Blues Juniors for gigs, and it's a wonderfully stalwart amp that gets the job done, but the "80 Proof" delivers another level of tone for this club-sized combo. The Jensen speaker is an ideal match for the amp, providing smoothness that rounds out harshness in single-coil-equipped guitars and blends in perfectly sweet chime when chords ring out. It's amazing how much resonance the oak cabinet adds to the low end, making the "80 Proof" sound much louder than other higher wattage combos, while retaining a balanced and well-defined voice in the upper-mid and high frequencies. Even without the fat switch engaged, a humbucker-equipped guitar sounds succulently thick when driving the master volume into vintage crunch territory. I also plugged in a favorite P-90 Junior guitar, and with the fat switch turned on, the combo was tremendous at achieving the kind of bluesy honk and snarl needed to cut through for slide work.

It's almost impossible to get an unusable tone from this amp, not to mention that it's a versatile combo that work with any guitar. It's been 21 years since Fender released the Blues Junior amplifier, but the new "80 Proof" demonstrates that, like an exceptional whiskey, the model just gets better with age. GA

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Thunder Struck

JOAN BAEZ AND MICK RONSON SHARE AN ELECTRIC MOMENT

ROCK AND ROLL can often make for strange bedfellows. One of the more unusual pairings of the mid Seventies was when Mick Ronson went on tour backing Bob Dylan as part of Dylan's Rolling Thunder Revue tour in 1975 and 1976. At that time, Ronson was still best known as the guitarist for David Bowie's Spiders from Mars, and he had just started his long-term collaboration partnership with former Mott the Hoople frontman Ian Hunter.

Filmmaker/photographer Jerry Aronson had previously shot the Rolling Thunder Revue's Houston Astrodome concert on January 25, 1976, which was Dylan's second benefit concert for imprisoned boxer Rubin "Hurricane" Carter. Aronson was fortunate to have a second chance to shoot the Rolling Thunder Revue when the tour passed through Fort Collins near his Colorado home a few months later on May 23.

"The show was like a traveling circus, so there was a lot to shoot," he says. "There was poetry from Alan Ginsberg and Anne Waldman, the Byrds played 'Mr. Tambourine Man,' and Dylan played a long set with electric and acoustic segments. It was an amazing concert."

During that night's performance, Ronson also sat in as the guitarist for Joan Baez's set. "I was shocked to see him playing guitar behind her," Aronson says. "With Mick on guitar, Joan's music was actually pretty heavy rock that night. It was an outdoor show and it was raining, which is why everyone on stage was wearing head gear. Most of the performers had wrapped their heads in rags to keep dry, but it looked pretty cool, too."

Typical of an outdoor show in Colorado during the warmer months, another guest made an uninvited appearance. "There was a big thunderstorm," Aronson says. "I was surprised that no one got electrocuted." Considering that a thunderstorm inspired Dylan to name the tour the Rolling Thunder Revue in the first place, it was an appropriate divine statement of approval for the tour's final outdoor show. —*Chris Gill*

Signed, limited-edition prints of this photo—and additional images by Jerry Aronson—are available from rockpaperphoto.com.

PHOTOGRAPH BY **JERRY ARONSON**

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